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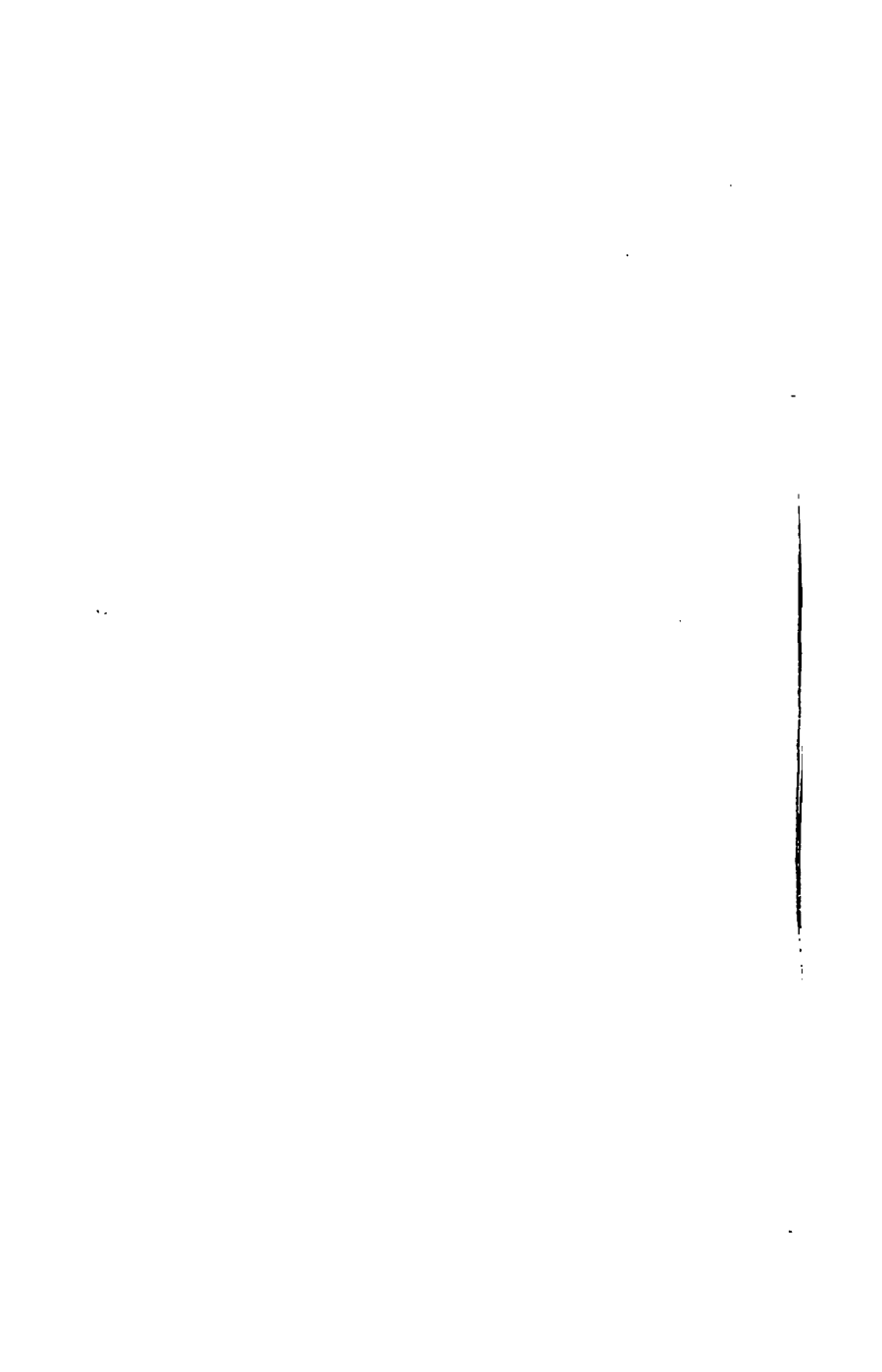
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CONFIRMATION
RECORDS.

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CONFIRMATION RECORDS.

BY

THE REV. G. R. MONCREIFF, M. A.,

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DEDICATION.

TO

THE MOST REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,

JOHN BIRD,

BY DIVINE PROVIDENCE,

LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

MY DEAR LORD,

IT is with no common pleasure that I dedicate this little Volume to your Grace. Slight as is its intrinsic value, it may perhaps in your eyes have some little adventitious interest, as a memorial of your last official act in the rural portions of the Diocese you have so lately left. To us at least—the pastor and people who were then favoured with your parting presence—the day of our recent Confirmation will be a day much to be remembered. Especially, I trust, by those more immediately concerned, the young persons who were then privileged to receive your parting blessing. Your

Grace will not suspect me of overvaluing any outward ordinance, or any human instrument; but surely I may say without affectation, that as Joseph brought his Ephraim and Manasseh to receive Jacob's blessing, so do I rejoice that the Ephraims and Manassehs of my flock should have heard God's acceptance of their Confirmation vows from the lips of one to whom, on so many grounds, I can look up as indeed a father in Israel. Your last words among us will long live in many hearts; nor, to my own mind, could any occasion have left behind it a more suitable farewell, than one which seemed so solemnly to renew the great apostolic commission, "Feed my lambs."

It is not for me to congratulate your Grace, or to pretend to speak the sentiments of the clergy on your elevation to the See of Canterbury. One ground of rejoicing, I cannot pass by: we are indeed thankful to feel that our Primate is one who understands and sympathizes with the duties and the trials of a parochial ministry, and who knows by large experience how closely the true life of the Church is bound up with the discharge of what might seem to be her humbler and her less important functions.

And yet, my Lord, I am very far from admitting that a Confirmation, or a preparation for it, is in any true sense of the words, a humble or unimportant function, either of the Bishop or the paro-

chial Clergyman. I have no experience of a town population; but, speaking exclusively of an agricultural district, I feel sure that there are few, if any portions of a Minister's work more full of responsibility, or more rich in promise. If the school be the well-sheltered nursery-garden, then Confirmation is the removing of the tender plant to opener ground, where it must be prepared to encounter the keen blasts of the world's temptations. In the school, I firmly believe, our deep work as ministers must begin, if we are to be pastors of parishes, as well as preachers to congregations, and visitors to individuals or households. Here, truly we lay up for ourselves much treasure for many years: here alone our labour is distinctly prospective—the investment of the capital of our time, in the hope of future though it may be of distant returns. Here alone can these three great objects be adequately secured:—the instruction of the whole body of our future hearers and parishioners—our personal knowledge of their individual characters—and our personal influence over them as the guides and counsellors of their youth. Let these be steadily pursued for twenty years, and I will venture to say that no Clergyman will think his labour unrequited. For every part of his work, he will then have laid a foundation broad and deep. His parish will become as one large family, and he the spiritual father of it, looked up

to with a very childlike love, and bearing an almost parental authority.

I seem to be digressing. Your Grace knows that it is an attractive theme. But surely Confirmation rightly understood looks back to the child's place in school, as truly as it looks forward to the Christian's place in the world and in the Church. The Confirmation class must supply the sequel to the Bible lessons of the school: when the Confirmation is over, we have in most cases done all we shall ever have the opportunity of doing, in the way of direct education: the key-stone is placed in the arch, it is time to strike away the scaffolding, and see if it stand firm in the symmetry of the heavenly model.

No doubt, there are many disappointments; the fair proportions of our buildings too often give way, when deprived of artificial support. The hopes of Confirmation-days fail, and the heart grows sick with treacherous promises and seemingly unanswered prayers. From such trials no duties of a pastor can ever be free; least of all, when he has to deal with elements so changing and uncertain, as the untried feelings and principles of the youthful heart. It is most evident, indeed, that with the increase of our school experience, the causes of mistake and errors of judgment must very greatly diminish. In proportion to our *previous* knowledge of candidates, will be our power

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of judging of the sincerity of their professions. But still it may be broadly admitted, that here, as always, "we walk by faith, and not by sight:" the blossoms of preparation-days will often be far more abundant than the harvest of ripened fruit.

Yet are we not sometimes premature in our regrets? The labour is not lost, because no immediate change is produced on the conduct or the character: many and many a case would prove, if traced, that the words of that solemn season had sunk deep, even while the light heart trifled with its holiest thoughts; that the impressive service had left ineffaceable traces behind it, though buried beneath the frivolities of a beguiling world. Our part is to sow the seed: for the rest, we can but commit them to that God who "giveth the increase;" let the apparent result be great or small, it is then out of our hands; "in due time we *shall* reap if we faint not."

On the other hand, my Lord, I feel more strongly than I have generally heard it expressed, how delicate and how difficult is the task of providing suitable instruction for our catechumens. No kind of address seems free of danger; calm explanation may leave the heart untouched: fervid exhortation may only encourage the worldly mind to adopt the mask of assumed seriousness. And thus, between the two, according to Bunyan's well-known figure, Formalist and Hypocrite come

tumbling over the wall into the narrow way. Or again, in dealing with more hopeful candidates, the more we dwell on doctrinal statements, the greater is the danger of head-knowledge being substituted for spiritual religion; while, if spiritual religion be the continual burden of our addresses and conversations, there may grow up in susceptible minds a spurious sentimental spiritualism, unhealthy in its origin, morbid in its development, and barren of the fruits of vital godliness. We must water the good seed, but we dare not force it.

I do not know how others feel: for myself I must fairly confess that I found few harder tasks to unpractised hands than to steer a clear course between this double Scylla and Charybdis. Increasing experience confirms the impression, that there are few if any occasions, on which a young clergyman will find it more difficult "rightly to divide the word of truth;" so as neither to erect a high standard, and leave his candidates far below it, nor yet be contented with a low standard, as the only one to which they can attain; but so practically to engage both their feelings and their reason in the work of preparation, that the tone of their minds being elevated in the process, their eyes may be gradually opened, to see spread out before them the fair field of spiritual religion. Is the aim visionary?—I trust not:—it sets up a high *mark which we may not always hit, but no lower*

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one should content the sanctified ambition of Christ's ministers. It was with this view that the following series of lectures and questions was framed. It would be affectation to deny that I regard the experiment as in some measure successful; but I can say with all sincerity that I publish them in the twofold hope of teaching and of learning. My first wish will be gratified if they smooth the way of any of my younger brethren in the ministry: I shall be truly grateful on the other hand, if they should be honoured by the attention of any whose hairs have grown grey in the work of the vineyard, by whose matured wisdom and experience their details might be modified, and their principle more successfully developed.

By the principle, I mean, *first*, the use of printed questions, to which answers are to be written at home; and, *secondly*, the nature and order of the subjects selected. To the printed questions as such I am disposed to ascribe a high value, higher indeed after trial of their working than I ventured beforehand to expect. They keep up the stream of thought and reflection, which without them would be apt to stagnate; they promote a continuous work of self-preparation, instead of a mere weekly oasis of thought in the midst of a desert of worldliness. It is scarcely worth while to advert to the minute objections which might be raised; such as the difficulty of

securing sincerity in the answers, the chance of unfair assistance, &c. &c. I can only reply that I have found these dangers far more formidable in prospect than in reality. Experience will vary with circumstances; but my own impression is, that wherever there is apparent earnestness in the lectures, there will be no lack of pains-taking and sincerity in the candidates. Some there will almost always be unimpressed, and for the time at least unimpressible: for such we can but "cast bread upon the waters," and hope to "find it after many days." The real trial of any system is on the large number who enter their names without any formed purpose of insincere profession, but knowing very little about Confirmation, and hardly conscious that it is any thing more than a decent ceremony received by "tradition from their fathers." On these, and still more on the smaller number who came at first with a serious purpose in their hearts, I am bound to say that the result has been most gratifying. Even the few who could not write, have, with hardly an exception, proved by oral answers at my final interviews with them that they had carefully studied the questions. Of the written answers there are of course many shades of merit; nearly all, however, are characteristic, most of them discovering a growing seriousness and intelligence, while even the very feeblest papers *served to indicate* the weaker points on which

there was the most need of personal conversation.

These details may seem to savour of egotism, and the same charge may be brought against the whole form of the present publication. I must be content to bear it; for, remembering what it was that I most needed as a novice, my design has been to furnish the young Clergyman not with a mere theory, or general directions, but with the outline of a practical scheme which has been tried, and which he may try again. I wish to give him not a picture, but working drawings of his building. To do this, there seemed no other way than the one here adopted; in which, after all, if there be more of the appearance, there is less of the substance of egotism, than if I had laid down broad generalizations on the limited experience of a single parish. For the same reasons, I leave the questions exactly as they were, and in the outlines of Lectures, keep as closely as I can to the notes which I had before me in speaking to my own candidates. Many improvements would readily occur; but I felt that if something might thereby be gained in correctness, far more would be lost by destroying the living likeness to an actual Confirmation. With all their deficiencies, I prefer submitting them to your Grace, as the true record of my last attempt, under your episcopal superintendence, to feed the lambs of the flock you were pleased to entrust to my charge.

Probably, too, they are really better as they stand, than I could make them now. Such work is better done, under all the disadvantages of haste, while the heart is warmed by the fresh interest of a present duty, than in the cooler retrospect of subsequent reflection. It is easier to answer rightly to the question, "*What shall I now say? What pastures shall I now open for the lambs to feed in?*" than to this, "*What ought I to have said, or what should I say at some future period to some unknown children who might then be candidates for Confirmation?*" We might please a philosopher in replying to the question in its second form: the first is more likely to elicit the profitable statement of that "*foolishness of God which is wiser than men.*" There are, indeed, views of the ordinance which would make it no more necessary to frame our addresses with actual candidates in view, than for a mathematician to sit gazing at Venus or Jupiter, while calculating the conditions of a planet's orbit. If such views are right, these Lectures and Questions are radically defective; for, certainly, they pretend to no scientific arrangement. They have a method; but it is—if the word do not sound too ambitious—metaphysical, rather than logical; following the natural course of feelings in the young persons for whom they were intended, rather than the accurate adjustment of the subject as a matter of *analysis*.

They assume as the starting point, God's gospel of life preached to immortal souls ; and the light in which throughout the Confirmation season is regarded is, as a solemn time of God's speaking to His children, and of their intelligent choice between Him and the world. The questions were meant to be chiefly *suggestive*, stimulating their own thoughts, rather than probing the state of their minds, or the extent of their knowledge. I trust that in the few which relate to personal experience, I shall not be thought to have transgressed the limit of sound discretion, or given any encouragement to unhealthy display of feeling. I can truly say, that none was exhibited. The answers subjoined are given as fair specimens, not with the idea of their possessing any especial merit, but simply in pursuance of my general design, to shew, as a matter of fact, how the system worked. For its one object of promoting serious thought, I believe it would be found effectual, whenever life is breathed into the dry bones of a lecture, by the spirit of personal affection, which shall make each candidate to feel that his own soul individually is an object of anxiety and of prayer to the Minister from whose lips he is taught. Let the Clergyman be able to say, "*God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ ;*" and I believe that generally he may add the accompanying words, "*I thank my God*"

“ being confident that He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ.”

Under such training, few will remain to the end, whom we shall not be able with a clear conscience to present to the Bishop. Our closing interviews may very much lose the character of examinations, and give us opportunities of friendly and personal conversation, far more likely to leave a permanent impression, than the most solemn words of a cold and distant examiner. Some of our candidates may still be retained awhile as members of sacramental classes ; others must go from us to the wide world, to be “ kept,” we trust, “ from the evil.”

It will be seen that I assume as a natural result, that there may be hopeful subjects of Confirmation, who may not immediately become communicants. I cannot bring myself to regard it as essential to the idea of fitness for the one rite, that there should be instant readiness to partake of the other. The Church has not so ordered it. She provides, indeed, that none be admitted to the communion until they are confirmed, or willing to be so. It is of course assumed that communion should follow ; but we are, I conceive, left free to allow, if we see cause, an interval for subsequent preparation. It is very true that the same state of heart is required for both : the same consciousness of sin,

the same leaning on Christ, the same confidence that "his grace shall be sufficient for us." But it is equally true, that in the heart of many a promising young disciple, there are doubts and fears which the clearest reasoning cannot all at once chase away: which do not hinder it from making a humble dedication of itself to the Father, but do to its eyes surround with strange clouds and darkness the mysterious table of the Lord. Are we harshly to refuse from such the reasonable service which they are ready to offer? Or are we to seek to extort from trembling lips the faltering promise which wounds the tender conscience in the giving? Oh, surely, my Lord, it is not thus we are to approve ourselves ministers of Him who "gathereth the lambs with His arm." Surely, there may be many such, for whom the experience of Confirmation blessings—of God's presence with them in the service, and His grace poured out upon them in their subsequent walk—may be the very refreshment which their weak faith may need to enable them to come to the communion-table with a hearty confidence that they shall be made welcome there. I may add, that while many hesitate to give a pledge to attend the Lord's Supper, there are very few whom we should wish to retain who will not readily avail themselves of the opportunity of further instruction.

And now, my Lord, I hope I have not unduly

availed myself of the sanction of your name. It will, of course, be understood that that sanction extends no further than the general outline and purpose of the volume.

Praying that the Church may long be favoured with your presiding care, and have daily cause for thankfulness to Him who placed you at her head,

I am,

My Lord Archbishop,

Yours, with affectionate respect,

G. R. MONCREIFF.

Tattenhall Rectory,

May 15, 1848.

CONFIRMATION RECORDS.

DEC. 26TH, 1847.—I have now given the first notice for the approaching Confirmation. In looking forward to the preparation weeks, I feel as a traveller standing at a point from which many ways diverge. So various are the views which may be taken of Confirmation, that serious as is the responsibility of a candidate, that of the clergyman appears very much greater. The recollections of 1844 are laden with not a little disappointment, though tempered by much that speaks of God's gracious presence. May there not be more room than we are apt to allow, for seeking the cause of failure, as much in the deficiencies of our own instructions, as in the weakness or insincerity of those who receive them? Of this I am certain, having looked over my notes of lectures on that occasion, that my present course must be materially different. There must be less of dogmatic teaching, and more speaking to the heart. No doubt, I shall have many, who will have much to learn; but I must try to find the way of administering the wholesome draughts of instruction, under the form of counsel, rather

than of precept,—of sweetening “doctrine and reproof” by the continual presence of the spirit of affection.

I can see no less than four tenable theories of Confirmation. It may be regarded—

1. As a distinctive institution of the Church of England.
2. As an apostolic ordinance, supplementary to baptism.
3. As a renewal of the baptismal covenant.
4. As a preparation for the holy communion.

The first is the popular, the second the historical view ; the third and fourth are very generally blended into one, on the assumption that the standard for Confirmation is to be practically the standard for Communion. I should not wish to put any one of them entirely out of sight ; but I must have some one leading idea, some key-note to which every strain may be referred. My inclination leads me to the third. I feel very strongly the necessity of dislodging, if possible, from the minds of these young people, all formal notions of the service, all tendency to regard it as a matter of course, to be gone through according to the customary routine, without the solemn sense of personal responsibility. It is certainly desirable to impress upon them, that it is a Church of England rite, by which they must be understood to declare themselves members of that

Church. Nor is the opportunity to be lost, of attacking the loose unsettled notions, which keep so many lingering as borderers on the confines of different denominations, under the feeling that, because there are many sections of the church, there is no need of their adhering to one rather than another. Few errors, I believe, have been more hurtful—in country districts especially,—to the stability and growth of young disciples. As a minister of Christ, I should wish to see all in whom I am interested, not only conscientious, but consistent: I am sure they cannot be strong for the good fight of faith, without making a decided choice of the communion to which they mean to belong, and steadily adhering to it. As a minister of our own church, I earnestly desire to rear for her sons and daughters, whom *she* may present with acceptance before the throne of the great King. But still, this cannot be the first object. Before all churchmanship, comes the one thing needful. Souls are dying—are dead: my first care must be, to awaken them to newness of life. With such an opportunity in my hands, as the Confirmation season supplies, I would desire to catch the spirit of Paul, when he said, “God sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel;”*—not to administer formal rites, but to “prophesy to dry bones, that they may

* 1 Cor. I. 17.

hear the word of the Lord."* My prayer must be, for every young heart that comes under my influence on this occasion, that it may be a solemn time of the Spirit's dealing with that heart; that all may feel that it is God with whom, in this matter, they have to do, and thoroughly examine into the state of their affections and purposes, before they take upon themselves the promise to be "soldiers and servants of Jesus Christ."

I should be most unwilling, therefore, to set out with any historical or ecclesiastical notion of the ordinance. It could only tend to chill any warm feeling, which might be kindled already, by diverting the thoughts from self-examination to abstract discussion, which could not touch the heart or conscience. I am happy to think that our Church formularies impose on me no obligation to take any such course. The articles may be said to be silent. The baptismal service simply enjoins that the child be brought to be confirmed as soon as it is properly instructed. The rubric at the end of the catechism implies in the bare letter, that nothing more is required than *verbal* knowledge of the catechism. I presume there are now few clergymen who will so interpret it. The true comment is the preface to the Confirmation service, in which the reason for that rubric is stated to be, 1st, "To the end, that Confirmation may be ministered to the more edifying of such as shall receive

* Ezekiel xxxvii. 4.

it;" and 2nd, more particularly, "to the end that children, being now come to years of discretion, and having learned what their Godfathers and Godmothers promised for them in baptism, they may themselves, with their own mouth and consent, openly before the church, ratify and confirm the same; and also promise, that by the grace of God, they will evermore endeavour themselves faithfully to observe such things as by their own confession they have assented unto." Now a promise is no promise, unless it comes from the heart. The Church can know nothing of Euripides' oaths of the tongue; her plain intention is that children may "learn," that is, understand and feel, the obligations and blessings of the baptismal covenant, and not with "mouth" only, but "with their own mouth *and consent*,"—i. e. consent of the heart,—“ratify and confirm the same.” Here is the Church's theory of Confirmation, identical with the third of those stated above. Of its historical foundation, there is a passing notice in one of the collects:—"Upon whom (*after the example of Thy holy apostles,*) we have now laid our hands." In the 60th and 61st canons, the formal notion is indeed brought more prominently forward; though even there accompanied with general instructions to the minister, to "prepare and make able" young persons to "render an account of their faith according to the catechism."

So that, even in her most formal document, but very markedly, at all events, in her public teaching, let who will make her ordinance formal, the Church does not. She means it to be a living sacrifice, the self-dedication of children to the Lord, which is their "reasonable service."

Agreeably to this rule, I must make it my study, both in conversation, and in class-lectures, to engage the whole heart in the work of preparation. My preliminary interviews begin to-morrow: in these my objects must be, *first*, to ascertain the amount of knowledge; *secondly*, to get some general acquaintance with the state of the feelings and intentions; *thirdly*, to give such advice, caution, or encouragement, as the circumstances and character of each may seem to demand. It is a hard work, needing great wisdom. But it is impossible to determine how to speak. I *must* judge for each candidate at the moment.

JANUARY 2, 1848.

OUTLINE OF SERMON.*

PROV. XXIII. 26.

"*My son, give me thine heart.*"

God speaks to His children, and He asks for a gift. "It is not gold or silver that I ask—no

* *Enlarged from notes taken at the time by one of the candidates.*

jewels, or precious stones, or costly oblations—I ask for that which in itself is not worth bringing ; my son, give me *thine heart*.” He speaks especially to the young—“My son,” my daughter, “give me thine heart; though it be a foolish, sinful heart—a heart full of vain things—a weak, deceitful, worldly heart—a heart laden with iniquity—yet still, it is the only thing that I will take at thine hand—oh! do not refuse the one gift I ask—but at once give me thine heart.”

He has long been desiring to have it, that He might make it His treasure-house, and store it with all manner of spiritual riches. The world says, “Do not give it—there is time enough to spare—enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season—and, when they have wearied thee, and death draws near, thou canst then at last give the heart to God.” The flesh says, “Thou wilt soon repent of giving it over to so hard a master: when thy natural desires are all checked and mortified, when thou findest the strict law of holiness reigning over all thy thoughts, thou wilt long for the liberty thou art enjoying now, without giving the heart to God.” The Devil says, “Be thine own master—do not give up thy right of choosing what seemeth good in thine eyes—take thine own course, and do not rashly promise what thou canst not after all perform—do not pretend to give thine heart to God.”

So, then, you have to choose who shall have your heart. The world, the flesh, and the Devil, are ready to occupy it: wilt thou give it to them? Or, wilt thou hear the invitation from thy heavenly Father, "My son, give *Me* thine heart."

You have heard, for the second time to-day, another invitation—to the solemn rite of Confirmation. For those who are of the proper age, it is very much the same invitation in another form. When I call on you, as your Minister, to come to renew the promise of your baptism, it is in these very words that I would speak to you, asking you solemnly to renounce the world, the flesh, and the Devil, and declare your hearty purpose to give the heart to God. Take these words, then, as the call of God to you to-day, and consider what kind of service He requires, when He says, "My son, give me thine heart."

1. *It must be a willing service.*—"Not by constraint, but willingly." If you come to be confirmed, because your parents wish it, or because others are coming, or for any such reason, you are not bringing the heart to God, and He meets you with a word of reproof: "Bring me no formal worship, no promise of the lips;—oh! My son, give me thine heart." You must come, because you desire to serve the Lord; because, without Him, there is no happiness here, and no forgiveness hereafter. But, perhaps, you will say, "I

am ready to give God my heart, but I do not see the use of this formal service." I do not think any honest heart will say so. You are offered an opportunity, *first*, of instruction, which may help you to be God's children; and *secondly*, of so "confessing Jesus before men," as to shew to yourselves and others that you trust He will "confess you before His Father."* What can keep you from being willing to do this? Surely, no good reason. Watch over your feelings. Do not listen to excuses. Remember that "the heart is deceitful above all things."† Be sure that if you are not willing thus to seal by the outward rite your promise to be the Lord's, the real reason is, that you have not made up your minds to give the heart to Him.

2. *A spiritual service.* — He must have the *whole* heart. There must be no parting of your affections between Him and the world. Your promise is to be, that henceforth the Lord alone shall reign over your heart. You are to give to Him your warmest love. You are to honour Him in all you do. You are to strive in all your little trials and daily duties, to live to His glory; "whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, doing all to the glory of God."‡

3. *A believing service.* — Perhaps you say, "How *can* I give my whole heart to God, when,

* Matt. x. 32. † Jeremiah xvii. 10. ‡ 1 Cor. x. 31.

whatever I do, sin is present with me?" But remember, on the one hand, that whether you are confirmed or not, the command still lies upon you, and the sin is laid to your charge, if you refuse; and surely, you cannot think that the guilt of sin will be greater, *because*, with an honest purpose, you have promised to fight against it. And remember, on the other hand, that if you have once given yourselves to God, then greater is He that is for you, than all they that can be against you: remember who hath said, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness :"* remember that you are giving your heart to one who gave His own Son to die for your sins; "Shall He not with Christ freely give you all things?"† If Jesus had not died, you might well have been afraid: but now—"Why are ye so fearful, oh! ye of little faith."‡

And so, in conclusion, I bid you come. I hope God's grace will enable you. Do not put off to a more "convenient season."§ "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the time of salvation." I dare promise you, that coming in faith to the outward service, because you desire to come in spirit to God Himself, you shall be made welcome. I pray you, in Christ's stead, "My son, give me thine heart."

* 2 Cor. xii. 9. † Rom. viii. 32. ‡ Matt. vii. 26. § Acts xxiv. 25

JANUARY 21ST, 1848.—After many unavoidable delays, my classes are now arranged. I have upon my list twenty-nine girls and sixteen boys. They will come to me in three divisions: (A) my own school-girls,* twelve in number, on Monday after-

* By "my own school-girls," I mean all who either are or have been under my own instructions in the National School. Towards them, I could assume a tone which would have been strained if adopted towards the rest. I could speak with authority and affection of a semi-parental kind, as one to whom their faults and weaknesses were well known of old, and who "had no greater joy than to hear that his children walked in truth." Had the number of the boys allowed of it, I could have wished to divide them in the same way. As it was, I was obliged for this time, to content myself with one such class, as a specimen of what a Confirmation-class ought to be—the carrying on of the lambs from the little school-meadows to the wider pasture now opened for the flock—the sounding forth on a nobler instrument the same strains which with feebler tone have formed the spiritual taste of childish ears. I trust to see the day, when the great body of our candidates may thus come to us, as to those by whom from childhood they have been fed with the bread of life. How much this feeling lightens, for the instructor, the work of preparation, they can tell who have tried. Our scholars—especially those who have left School—feel as the mountaineer brought home to his native hills. The mountain-tops, which are barren to others, are for him lit up with the light of old remembrances. So, the whole pathway of truth—rugged and uninviting to the common eye—borrows a charm from the association with the pleasant days of school instruction. Even on the most unpromising, such recollections have a hallowed influence. They breathe again the fresh air of childhood—sleeping memories are awakened—chilled affections revive—and from the grave of every buried promise, there seems to arise a voice, bidding them to renew, ere yet it be too late, the vows of those better days. "To-day, *after so long a time*—to day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

noons, (B) the other girls on Thursday, (C) and the boys on Monday evening. I receive them in my own house, which I prefer to church or school-room, as less formal and alarming, and giving a more practical tone to the meetings. The object being to impress them with a sense of their responsibility in this great matter, I think it better that they should not feel as a congregation, but as if listening individually to words of personal application. On the other hand, I will not treat them as school children ; because my great aim is to drive childish notions out of their heads. They shall read the different passages of Scripture, &c. but I shall not ask for answers to *vivâ voce* questions. The printed papers, and personal interviews, will supply ample opportunities of examination.

SCHEME OF LECTURES.

It is easier to form a general theory of Confirmation, than to settle how to give it a practical shape. I shall have to deal with these five classes :—

I. Some (I hope) who have already believed in Christ.

II. Others who *understand* the gospel, and are in earnest seeking for salvation.

III. Many who mean well, but are strangers to spiritual religion.

IV. Some so ignorant as hardly to know what they are about to do.

V. A few (perhaps) who are knowingly insincere.

Plainly, it will be difficult to speak suitably to one of these classes, without being above and below the level of others. So far as this, I think the way is clear, that the Second and Third are those whose interests ought chiefly to be regarded. But I shall not be satisfied unless I can succeed in uniting in each Lecture some views of truth which shall be adapted to the wants of every candidate.

The First class presents no difficulty at starting; because the very same points which need to be impressed on candidates of the Second and Third are those on which it will be most profitable to to the farther advanced, "to stir up their minds, putting them in remembrance." Comparing the two latter classes, again, the same thing is true: the lesson fitted for the less instructed will serve to refresh and quicken the hearts of those who have already in some degree learnt it. How, then, should I proceed, with especial reference to catechumens of the third or neutral stage? First, I must aim at producing the impression of the *reality* of spiritual religion as a work wrought in the heart. Without this, all other teaching is vain. The popular feeling about Confirmation divests it

so completely of a spiritual character, that I believe human language hardly contains words strong enough to force home in every case the conviction, that we really mean what we say. Let the clergyman talk as he will; the feeling is, that it is all good—quite what *he* might be expected to say,—but *of course* it is to be a mere matter of form, the sound of a pleasant instrument, but like Mendelssohn's "Lieder ohne worte," the melody is not united to any words of practical import. I cannot row against so strong a current; I must look for a breeze to fill the sails. At our first meeting, therefore, I would as it were take them by surprise, by leaving for a while in the back ground the technicalities of Confirmation, and dwelling on the great foundation-truth, that religion and religious duties are plants of no spontaneous growth in the heart of man, but must spring up from seed sown by the divine Husbandman. My *First* Lecture must go to show their need of spiritual influence, now—and always; for Confirmation—and for daily life.

Then, I think, should follow, as the subject of the *Second* Lecture, the consideration of the real nature of the Confirmation promise, as following from the principles already laid down.

If these two lectures have produced their proper effect, they will then have reached the point *of beginning* to feel their unworthiness and unfit-

ness for so solemn an approach to God. It will be time to apply the encouragements of the gospel. The *Third* Lecture should, therefore, have for its subject the central doctrine—"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

Subsequent lectures must be determined by the time which may still remain. There should be one on prayer—one on daily duties—one on indwelling sin. Many other subjects would occur. But if, as seems most probable, I am obliged by circumstances to condense the whole course into five, the *Fourth* must handle the essential point of preparation for the Holy Communion.

And then, the *Last* should drop didactics, and close with words of earnest exhortation.

This would be my course, with a view to the improvement of the third class candidates in particular. It would plainly include nearly every thing I should desire to say to those above them. As to the fourth, there would be much which they could not quite apprehend. The fourth lecture especially might be almost out of their reach. But the substance of the others seems very much what one ought to try to teach them. And, perhaps, it may be often possible in such cases to reach the heart, when efforts on the intellect would fail. With the fifth class, the first lecture will be nearly decisive; if it touches the conscience, they will follow the rest of the course.

If not, there is nothing left to trust to, except the grace of God,—who is able “from stones to raise up children unto Abraham”—working more by the general tone of what is said, than by particular subjects or remarks.

On the whole, I am content to try the scheme I have now sketched. As text-passages I would choose

- 1.—Ezekiel xxxvii. 1—10.
- 2.—Joshua xxiv.
- 3.—John iii. 1—19.
- 4.—2 Chronicles xxx.
- 5.—1 Corinthians ix. 24—27.

Besides explaining these, I would take the leading answers of the Catechism, in illustration of principles. This, with prayer, will abundantly occupy our time.

JANUARY 24TH AND 27TH.

LECTURE I.

EZEK. XXXVII. 1—10.

You know the use I mean to make of this passage.* I want you to see, in these “dry bones,” the picture of your own hearts as they are by nature—cold and dead and earthly. God is as it were asking me and every minister—“Can these bones live?” Can the thoughtless heart ever be brought to cry out, “What must I do to be saved?” Can minds, which have been full of folly and of sin, ever come to be holy and pure? We cannot tell. We can only answer, “Oh Lord, thou knowest.” All we know is, that we cannot make dead souls live. Our preaching cannot do it. Our advice and exhortations, our counsel and reproof, cannot do it. After all we can say or do, sinners will still go on in their own sinful way; as if one were to preach to the winds to hush, or to the sea to be still, or to the river to cease from running. “But with God all things are possible,” and He shews us here that dry bones *can* live, when He puts into them His Spirit’s quickening power.

Let us look closely at the vision.

1. You see, first, the state of the place to which

* I preached each Sunday, in a general way, on the subject of the Monday’s lecture.

Ezekiel was sent. It was a burial-place—a valley into which dead bodies had long been thrown. Not, of course, a real valley, but a picture put by God before his mind. He seemed to see bones on every side—scattered about—lying in heaps—without order or arrangement. No life, no warmth, no form, no comeliness; the limbs could not move, the hands could not handle, the eye had lost its sparkle, the ear its quickness, the head had no bright thoughts passing through it. The souls were gone. The very shape of the body was lost. There remained nothing but bones; and “behold, they were very dry.”

Do you ask, what is the meaning of this? Look to the world, and you may see. That valley is the picture of the world. Those dry bones are only too true a likeness of the souls to whom the gospel is preached. Yet stay—do *not* look there. Look closer home. Your own hearts can read the riddle, and tell you what this parable means. How are they by nature? How were they, when you were first told of God’s mercy in Christ? Were they at once full of love and joy and thankfulness? Was all sin hateful? Is it hateful now? Was every other thought lost in your sense of the priceless value of the Saviour’s dying love? Do you now love Him with such love as befits those whom He purchased with his own precious blood? *Or, is it not too true, that you find or have found*

it hard to turn your affections from things of the world, to "love Him who first loved you?" If you feel this, then you know for yourselves how the world is like this valley. Your own hearts tell you that they are indeed "very dry."

2. But Ezekiel "prophesied as he was commanded" to these dry bones. To what purpose? They could not hear him. Yet God bid him speak, and he obeyed. Well; and may you not say the same of all our speaking of Jesus and His cross? I speak to-day, I must fear, to some souls that are yet dead. I tell you, "Hear the word of the Lord." But you *cannot* hear. I know it. I feel it. I desire to impress it on my own mind, and on yours, that all my longing for your soul's salvation can no more open your hearts to receive the truth, than could Mary's weeping bring back Lazarus from the tomb, or the tears of the widow of Nain give life to him who lay upon the bier. Why, then, do I speak? Above all, how can I speak in hope?

3. Because I believe as Ezekiel did, that when God commands, He will bless what is done in obedience to His commandment. See what followed. "There was a shaking" among the bones, and they did obey Ezekiel's voice. They moved—they joined each other—each found his place—limbs and joints and sinews in due order—the *confused mass of bones became a number of hu-*

man bodies lying in that valley. How was this? God gave the word—and God gave life to the bones. There, then, is my hope. There should be yours. I am not alone with you here. There is Another, whom you cannot see. And I know that the coldest heart among you will soon be warmed, if the Holy Spirit work upon it with His converting power. I speak in hope of “a shaking” among the dry bones, when He who alone is able shall speak to the heart what I can only address to the outward ears.

4. Yet, observe, the work is not yet done. These bones have all the shapes of human bodies. Look at them from a distance, and you might think they were alive. Come nearer, and you see they lie motionless: “there is no breath in them.”

What is this meant to teach us? Is there any state in which the soul can be like these bones, when they were formed into bodies, and yet had no breath in them? Surely there is; and a very important state for you to remember. You may be brought to feel that you are sinners. You may try to repent—you may leave off sin—you may go to Church, read the Bible, keep the Lord’s day holy, pray in secret, and so on: will all this save you? No; there may still be wanting the new heart, the “godly sorrow,” the hatred of sin, the true love to Jesus, the lively faith in his atoning blood. *Without these, you may easily look like*

true Christians; but, remember, without these you cannot enter into heaven. In spite of all that you can do, it will still be said of you; "They are not really alive—there is no breath in them."

5. Look, then, once more at the valley. What do you see now? Ezekiel is prophesying to the wind; and it is coming, moving, stirring, soft-breathing with a gentle rushing sound, and the lifeless bodies rise, one and another and another—and where dry bones lay, there stands "an exceeding great army."

Shall I see this among you? Or, rather, will there be this work upon your hearts? It matters little whether I can mark it or not. It is a secret work; "the wind bloweth as it listeth."*—This Confirmation-time should be a time of awakening. I am commanded to say now to you, "Hear the word of the Lord." I am commanded to pray for the breath of the Spirit to be breathed into you. Pray earnestly to-day, that this time may not pass by without leaving solemn impressions behind.

Some there are among you, who have, I trust, been "quickenened when they were dead in trespasses and sins."† To these I say, Pray that you may feel more and more every day, that "by grace ye are saved."‡ Think much of your former condition—how dead and cold and helpless you were; and

* John iii. 8. † Eph. ii. 1. ‡ Ro. 5.

make it your heart's desire, that this season may tend to humble you more for your own sinfulness, and give you a firmer faith in God's power and willingness through Christ, to save you "to the uttermost."*

Some there may be, who have "the form of godliness," without "the power;"† others who are altogether without spiritual life. I have seen both. In speaking to you privately, I have often felt that all was very dry—often again, that though there was much that was pleasing, there was no real "breath," no spiritual knowledge of Christ. Some hardly feel that Confirmation is a serious matter at all—some have no fear, but think themselves quite ready to undertake it.

Now, perhaps, you may have been wondering what this vision of dry bones has to do with Confirmation. Everything. It tells you that without a deep work of the Spirit on your hearts, Confirmation will be useless—an idle ceremony, better left alone. I beseech you, consider it well. You are engaging in a solemn transaction. It is God with whom you have to do. Be sure, on the one hand, He will not be content if you do not come to the service, with awakened hearts. Be sure, on the other hand, that His Spirit is even now striving with you, that He may breathe into you the breath of life.

* *Heb. vii. 25.*

† *2 Tim. iii. 5.*

Especially,* let me speak to you, to whom my voice is more familiar than to others. I have an earnest hope for you, that these days may be days of the "Spirit's outpouring from on high."† I cannot be content to leave any of you "very dry." I have watched long over you—I have prayed often for you; I cannot but grieve whenever I see in you the dryness and the deadness of unrenewed souls. Nor yet can I leave you without the breath of life. It will not be enough that you should have a passing interest in the truths of the gospel, while the heart remains untouched. To see you listening to *my* words—influenced by *my* counsels—all this is as nothing, if there be not the signs of the Spirit's working, the marks of your having listened to the voice of the heavenly Teacher. I cannot be content, without seeing you "standing on your feet," as a portion of the "exceeding great army," which is always fighting under Christ's banner. I beseech you, "press toward the mark." Be not satisfied with a *little* sense of religion. I have often met you in school. I now meet you here. I pray God, that we may often meet at a communion-table, and at last stand together on the right hand of the throne of glory.‡

* Addressed only to the Monday Afternoon Class.

† Isai. xxxii. 15.

‡ See Note A, page 47.

PRAYER.*

OH LORD GOD, who hast commanded Thy children to give their hearts to Thee, receive, we beseech Thee, these Thy sons and daughters, drawing near before Thee, to bring the sacrifice Thou lovest, the broken and the contrite heart, with which Thou art ever well pleased. They are not worthy to approach Thee. They have no power to give Thee their hearts. By nature they are dead in trespasses and sins. They have thought their own thoughts, spoken their own words, walked in their own ways. Too often, Thou hast not been in all their thoughts. They have left undone the things that they ought to have done ; and they have done the things they ought not to have done ; and there is no health in them. But Thou canst quicken them to newness of life. Thou canst teach them the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Thou canst warn each careless heart how soon the days of youth will pass away. If Thy Spirit breathe upon them, we know the dead shall live, the slumbering shall awake, the foolish shall be made wise, the carnal mind shall no longer be at enmity with Thee, the unbelieving heart shall look to Jesus on the cross. Oh Thou, who didst at first breathe into man's nostrils the breath of life, that man might become a living soul, breathe on these Thy children with the *breath of Thy converting and sanctifying grace.*

* See Note B, page 48.

Without Thee, our words are powerless, and ordinances are vain. Except Thou, the Lord, do build the house, our labour is but lost that build it. Except Thou keep them, we Thy watchmen watch in vain. Breathe upon them, oh Lord. We thank Thee that Thou hast brought them here, to prepare to give themselves up in a solemn service unto Thee. Oh! if there be any here who have never yet learned to flee from the wrath to come, be with us, Lord, and be with them, while at Thy command we prophesy to the dry bones. Stir them up unto repentance, and grant that ere they come before Thee at Thine altar, they may have sought and found Thee at the throne of grace.

“Have mercy upon them, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out their transgressions. Wash them thoroughly from their iniquity, and cleanse them from their sin. Make them to acknowledge their transgressions, and to have their sin ever before them. Against Thee, Thee only, have they sinned, and done much evil in Thy sight; that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest. Behold, they were shapen in iniquity, and in sin did their mothers conceive them. Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden parts do Thou make them to know wisdom. Hide Thy face from their sins, and blot out all their

iniquities. Create in them clean hearts, oh God, and renew right spirits within them."

If there are any here who have a name to live while they are dead—if any who are yet halting between two opinions—on them, also, oh Lord, cause Thy Spirit to breathe. Shew them that they that worship Thee must worship in spirit and in truth. From all lip-service and formal ordinances, from all self-righteousness and hypocrisy, from worldliness of heart and the deceitfulness of sin, good Lord, deliver them.

And, above all, oh Lord, to Thine own children give Thine abundant grace. If Thou hast taught them to believe in Jesus, and to love Him, give them more faith, more love, more strength. Oh Thou God of our Lord Jesus Christ, Father of glory, give unto them the spirit of wisdom. Enlighten the eyes of their understanding. Sanctify them wholly by Thy truth, Thy word of truth.

We commend them all to Thy keeping. Teach us to speak; teach them to hear; that the seed now sown may bring forth fruit abundantly, to the praise and glory of Thy Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CATECHETICAL INSTRUCTION.

I will now go on to remind you of what you have been taught in the catechism about the exact *nature of the engagement* you are about to make.

You are going to renew a covenant with God. Now, in every covenant, there must be promises on each side; and it is quite as much required that you should believe and desire what God promises to you, as that you should mean to keep the promise you are making to God. Let us look to-day at those blessings which He undertakes to give to His people, in that solemn covenant, of which baptism is the sign and seal. In the catechism you speak of your “*Baptism, in which I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.*” When you are confirmed, then, you mean to say in your hearts,—“I desire to come to God as a member of Christ, as a child of God, as an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. I believe that I may so come, and claim as my own all these glorious names. I believe it, because God has promised these privileges to every sinner who will come through Christ to receive them. That promise was claimed for me in my baptism. I now claim it again for myself. I am not afraid of being accounted too bold; for ‘whosoever cometh unto Him, He will in no wise cast out.’ ”

Is this the language of your hearts? Perhaps you have scarcely thought of it. Consider, then, now, the real meaning of these three names or titles.

I. “*Member of Christ.*”—See John xv. 1—6.

True believers are united to Jesus, as the branches to the vine. You are "members of Christ," if you "abide in Him" by faith.

II. "*Child of God.*"—See 1 John iii. 1, Rom. viii. 14, 15. You observe the marks of God's children—

1. God loves them.
2. They are led by His Spirit.
3. They are not afraid of Him.

III. "*Inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.*"—See 1 Pet. i. 3, 4, John xiv. 1—6, Mat. vi. 19—21. You are heirs of a kingdom, if you are Christ's disciples; for,

1. It is made ready for you.
2. You are made ready for it.

Study these texts well; and think as you read them, whether what they tell you of true believers answers to what you find in your own hearts. It is of no use to *say* you are members of Christ, if you know you have no faith to join you to Him. It is of no use to *call* yourselves God's children, if you have no childlike feeling towards Him. It is in vain to speak about being inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, if you have no "treasure" there. May the Holy Spirit give you grace so to consider the promises sealed to you in your baptism, that you may come to Him in Confirmation, with an earnest desire to be indeed and in truth, members of Christ, children of God, *inheritors of the kingdom of heaven!*

QUESTION PAPER.

I.

"A MEMBER OF CHRIST."

"A CHILD OF GOD."

"AN INHERITOR OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN."

1. How are Christ's member known?—John xv. 5.

2. Do you pray daily that you may "abide" in Christ?

Or,

Do you *intend*, from this time, to pray daily that you may "abide" in Christ?

3. How can any one become a "child of God"?—Gal. iii. 26.

4.—Do you feel that *you* can come boldly to God, as a child to a father?—Rom. viii. 15.

5. Are you living as a "child of God"?—Rom. viii. 14.

6. How may you know that there is a place for you in heaven?—John xiv. 2.

7. Do you pray that you may enter into the "inheritance" of Christ's people in heaven?

Or,

Do you *intend* to pray to be kept in mind of it day by day?—1 Peter i. 3, 4.

PRAYER.

Grant, O Lord, that I may have faith to abide in Christ, and be strengthened by His strength:—

Grant that by faith, I may be a child of Thine, and be led by Thy Spirit to think, and say, and do, nothing but what is pleasing in Thy sight:—

Grant that through faith, I may have my treasure in heaven, that where my treasure is, there my heart may be also:—

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SELECTED ANSWERS.

A.A.*

1. By their daily walk and conversation being that which is becoming in a Christian.

2. I do intend to pray daily for God's Holy Spirit to enable me to abide in Christ.

3. Through constant prayer, through real sorrow for sin, and through faith in Jesus Christ.

4. I can come boldly to God, and lay all my sins before Him, knowing that He will forgive them; for He hath said, "him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

5. I intend, by the help of God's Spirit, to live as a child of God."

6. Because Christ died to reconcile us to God, and has ascended into heaven to prepare a place for us.

7. I do intend to pray to be kept in mind from day to day of the solemn promise which I am about to make before God.

C. A.

1. By their works.

2. Yes, and by God's help, I mean to do so.

3. By faith.

4. I hope I have adopted God for my Father; and through the love of Jesus Christ, that He will accept me as one of His children.

5. I am endeavouring so to do, and hope by our blessed Lord's help to continue.

6. By reading the Scriptures; for instance, John xiv. 2.

7. I pray daily that I may be one of the inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.

* The first of these capitals denotes the classes to which the candidates belonged, in their order, as marked on page 27; the second is arbitrary, to distinguish them without identifying the writers. It will be observed that the same symbol never occurs twice; my object being, not to present picked specimens, but to give a fair representation of the real character of the answers. They are printed without the least alteration, except in spelling.

NOTE A, PAGE 39.—I can conceive of exception being taken to the tone of the latter part of this address, on the ground of its tendency to lead the candidates to look for instantaneous, or at least rapid conversion, in the process of preparing for Confirmation. It may be urged that it is not likely that such will be the case, in any large number of instances; and that the effect may only be to raise in the presumptuous over-weening confidence, and depress the timid with ill-founded disappointment. I am content to reply by a simple reference to the precedent of apostolic preaching. No Apostle ever preached with any lower aim than the *immediate* conversion of all who heard him. The breath of the Almighty Spirit was even then needed, to wing the arrows of conviction home; but the apostolic bow was ever bent with full force, to lodge those arrows in the heart. The minister of Christ is, I conceive, bound to copy their example. He has no right to stoop to be the inculcator of cold morality, the reformer of outward excesses. He is an “ambassador for Christ;”—with no discretionary powers, entitling him to lower his tone to suit the carnal ear: his instructions are precise—“Go, preach the gospel;” his message is distinct—“My son, give God thine heart.”

It is true, the Spirit most commonly seems to work slowly, sometimes very slowly. It is true also, that we are taught to expect that much seed will fall on unthankful ground. With this, we have nothing to do. We are to plant and water *now*; He, in his due time, gives the increase. Not that we can doubt but that, on the whole, the largest faith in the Minister brings down the most copious showers of blessings. But not at once—not visibly—not in proportion to our expectations. What we know is, that the Holy

Spirit works by means of the preached gospel ; and that gospel is no gospel, which does not bid sinners *now* to repent, and invite them *now* to a crucified Saviour.

For, again, let it be considered that beyond all question it is the *present* duty of every one of our candidates to repent and believe. If, then, a blessing is to rest on our instructions, we must, above all things, be careful to keep prominently before their eyes the twin-truths—that every day of unbelief is a day of sin, and that every day of life is an accepted time of mercy.

That our language should be carefully guarded, is true. But the danger of misapprehension is far greater, in dwelling on the formal rite, than on the practical preparation of the heart.

NOTE B, PAGE 40.—It is with great hesitation that I insert these forms of prayer. It would be a small objection, though true, to say that it is a species of composition so difficult as to preclude all hope of even moderate success. It is more to the purpose to state boldly that I conceive the attempt to be one in which success is strictly impossible. My own prayers with my Confirmation-classes were in every case extemporaneous ; and I feel thoroughly persuaded that no written or printed form can adequately supply their place. Knowing, however, that there are many among our younger clergy, who, either on principle or from personal feeling, might be unwilling to follow the same course, I have thought it necessary, for the completeness of this little volume as a manual,* to provide them with prayers written expressly

* I use this word for want of a better ; but I am not so presumptuous as to wish it to be employed as a manual, properly so called. Both the outline-lectures and these forms of prayer are intended much more as *guides* than as models.

for their use. Still, I repeat, I do so under protest. They must know their own feelings better than I can express them ; and, even if they dislike extemporaneous effusions, it would still be far better for the promotion of the spirit of prayer among their little flock, that they should themselves commit to paper the words in which they desire to join with their candidates in making their wants known to God.

Lest, however, I should be charged with inconsistency in this avowal, I must add a few words of explanation. I know of nothing in the principles or practice of the Church of England, which binds me to the belief that forms of prayer are to be preferred, and extemporaneous prayer rejected, in the more private offices performed by her ministers. I might go farther. Were I to say that there is nothing to prevent the introduction of the latter, even in public worship, it would be difficult to adduce any formal prohibition. Be it admitted, however, that the tendency of her regulations is to make the Liturgy the proper exponent of our feelings in congregational prayer. Thus far she speaks ; beyond this, she is silent, and the silence is as emphatic as words. Our reformers and other framers of our formularies could hardly have forgotten that besides the personal devotions of the clergyman, and his public ministrations, he must often be called on to pray with his family, with the sick, or in the course of pastoral intercourse with his people. Were we to assume that this contingency had been overlooked, it would leave the question absolutely open,—untouched by authority,—the unenclosed common of private judgment. But the fact is not so. There exists at least one quasi-authoritative expression of the judgment of the Church, in which the use of unwritten prayers is, if I mistake not,

distinctly contemplated. The 67th canon directs that “when any person is dangerously sick in any parish, the minister or curate, having knowledge thereof, shall resort unto him or her, to instruct and comfort them in their distress, according to the order of the Communion Book, *if he be no preacher*; or if he be a preacher, then *as he shall think most needful and convenient*.” Now, the Visitation Service is a service both of exhortation and of prayer; is it possible to resist the inference, that for both parts of it the minister who is a preacher is left free to substitute what “he shall think most needful and convenient?” If so, plainly, he is no more commanded to write out beforehand his own words of prayer, than his own words of exhortation. I would not stretch the authority of a canon; but the reference seems fair in reply, if the use of extemporaneous prayer is represented as foreign to the practice and spirit of the Church. It shews that in at least one instance, it is rather sanctioned than discouraged; while, throughout the rest of our authoritative documents, the silence of the Church not only leaves each minister to act according to his own judgment, but may fairly be held to imply that it was not considered that for such occasions a fixed form was necessary or desirable. And, if no *authorised* form, surely far less forms without authority.

In her whole course in this matter, I for one can heartily rejoice. I rejoice in our Liturgy:—

1. Because the prayers are in themselves, as a whole, far superior to any I have ever heard. Of all peculiar *gifts*, the gift of congregational prayer seems to me the rarest.

2. Because they secure an equable tone of devotion—*free* from the alternations of languor and excitement.

3. Because they emphatically mark the position of the minister, as not interceding for the people, but praying with them.

4. Because, being well known, they enable all who wish to pray, to pray without distraction, and prevent others from fancying that they are praying, when they are only watching to see what will come next.

5. Because, to blunt the edge of all objection, we have, as our warrant, one divinely-sanctioned form.

For all these reasons, I can far more than acquiesce in what seems to some the monotony of our Liturgy. Be it observed, however, that not one of these applies with any great force to the case of precomposed prayers for a Confirmation class. More especially as regards the first:—an occasional service of this kind, with a specific interest of its own, seems to demand and to facilitate the introduction of petitions which shall be felt to have immediate reference to its distinctive circumstances. Nor is there, I believe, in such a case, any real difficulty to a clergyman whose heart is warm in the work. It may be added, that on the assumption of earnestness on the part of the candidates, they will have in their minds very much the same feelings as our own, and will thus follow with ease and profit the train of devotional thought.

On the whole, without lengthened disquisition, I hold the proper place of a Liturgy to be where our Church has put it—as the expression of our *constant* wants and feelings: while, for special occasions, I believe she exercises a sound discretion, when she tacitly directs me to clothe the thoughts of the hour in such words as may be supplied by Him who “helpeth our infirmities.”

JANUARY 31ST AND FEB. 3D.

LECTURE II.

JOSHUA XXIV.

It was a solemn occasion of which this chapter speaks. The people stood in the midst of the land which God had given them. On every side were the signs of His favour;—vineyards and olive-yards, fruitful hills and sunny plains—all telling that they had really entered on the “land that flowed with milk and honey.” And now, Joshua’s work is done. He is ready to let them go to their homes. But, before they go, he has a question to ask; they have a choice to make. His question is, “Whom will ye serve?” Their choice is between Jehovah and the false gods of the nations of Canaan.

I have to ask you the same question. You have to make the same choice. In all my speaking to you at this time, I am only repeating Joshua’s words, “Whom will ye serve?” When you appear before God in Confirmation, you will be taking upon you the promise of these Israelites, “We will serve the Lord.”

Observe, then,

1, God’s mercies bestowed upon you, (v. 13, 17, 18.) Joshua mentions all that He had done for Israel, as the reason why the people were *bound to serve Him alone*. But what were all

these, compared with those which you have received? I cannot count them. Only ask yourselves this question, "What brings you here to-day?" In the answer, you are reminded of blessing after blessing, following each other quick as the waves of the flowing tide. You are here, because you were born in a Christian country—taught to feel that you had souls to save or lose—because you were given school—Bibles—sabbaths—church—teachers—ministers. And yet, why do I begin with these? To what purpose would you be here, if first of all Jesus had not died—the Father been reconciled—the Holy Spirit come down to lead you into all truth? These are your mercies; and along with these, I trust that for many of you I may add the grace which has enabled you to improve these privileges—deep thoughts of sin—of judgment—of God—of Christ, which are teaching you to "number your days, and apply your hearts unto wisdom."*

2. Then, *secondly*, God's question to you:—"Whom will ye serve?" You must choose. "No man can serve two masters.†" The Israelites were not left free to serve God a little and Baal a little. They must decide between the two; you must decide between Christ and the world. It is not, "*How much* will ye serve each?"—but "*Whom* will ye serve?"

* Ps. xc. 12.

† Matt. vi. 24.

If you are contented with the world's promises, if the world's pleasures are enough for you, then serve the world—live in it, die in it, come to judgment with it:—"Verily, I say unto you, ye have your reward."* But, if you are *not* content to have your portion with the world, then "*choose* you this day whom ye will serve." Cast away besetting sins—take up your cross, to follow Jesus—prepare yourselves for a life of daily striving against all that is evil. Which will you have? Self-indulgence now, and an angry God hereafter; or self-denial now, and hereafter the "rest" which "remaineth for the people of God?"†

3. But, *thirdly*, this is no easy choice. Observe, the people were ready (16—18); but Joshua rather damps the ardour of their zeal. He seems to doubt whether they had well considered what they were promising. "Ye cannot serve the Lord." Be sure you need the same caution. Nothing can be worse for you, than to make a light and careless profession of religion. "Ye cannot" order your hearts—bridle your words—restrain your feet from forbidden ways. "Ye cannot" uproot besetting sins—or school yourselves to find pleasure in unwelcome duties. "Ye cannot" "receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto" you, till you are enlightened by grace; "neither can ye know them, because they are spiritually discerned."‡

* Matt. vi. 2.

† Heb. iv. 9.

‡ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

4. Yet God accepts the promise. The people repeat their declaration (v. 21); and Joshua no longer checks them. He makes a covenant with them, on the strength of that engagement, and writes down the words, and sets up a stone to be a "witness unto them," lest they should afterwards "deny their God." That is to say, the stone was to put them in mind henceforward, of all that they had promised. If they should ever become worshippers of idols, then, whenever they should pass by that stone, it should seem to have a voice to reprove them,—the words of Joshua should, as it were, sound in their ears again; and, as men used to fancy that the spirit of one murdered would hover round the place of his death until the murderer was punished, so should their own broken promise appear to linger uneasily round that awful stone of witness.

You can easily conceive, with what a solemn feeling every Israelite from that day forward would pass by that sacred stone. Is there, then, no "stone of witness" for you? Many. Every written answer you give me now—every chapter we read together—this room—this book—still more, the holy house in which you are to be confirmed—the communion-table, before which you will kneel—every stone in the building, and every word of the service—shall all be as "stones of witness unto you, lest ye deny your God."

I stand before you to-day, as Joshua before the children of Israel. In God's name, I put the question to you, which you will hear in a more solemn way at the moment of Confirmation:—"Whom will ye serve?" I have been trying to make it plain to you that it is a real question,—as real as if two masters now stood before you, and you were asked, with which you chose to go. "Choose;" but remember that you are dealing not with me, or the Bishop, or any man, but with God—the "jealous God;" remember you have no secrets with Him; for "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."*

He requires you to watch over all your thoughts, your temper, passions, and desires;—to be careful in every daily duty, counting nothing trifling, but "doing all to the glory of God." As children, brothers, sisters, servants, neighbours, friends—and in every other way in which you have to do with the world—He must be honoured in your lives and outward behaviour. You must guard against all foolish levity, lest you laugh away the precious hours of life. You must not mind what others may do; but choose for yourselves to have the Lord for your God. I ask you to-day: Are you ready with true hearts to make this choice?

Especially† may I so speak to you. I have

* Heb. iv. 13.

† For Class A.

been long trying to be as a Joshua to you, to lead you to the true promised land—to a better rest than Joshua could offer to Israel. I have believed that God has provided an “inheritance” for you, and has put you under my charge to bring you to it. I have endeavoured to trust His promise, “I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”* I have tried, under all difficulties and disappointments, to “be strong and of a good courage.” And now, am I leading you to that rest? Have you come to the true Jesus, when weary and heavy-laden, that He might give you rest? Have all your school instructions taught you to choose, like Mary, “the better part, which shall not be taken away?”†

Like Joshua, I must soon cease to speak to you, Soon, you will have no other instruction but the Church-services, your Bible, and the voice of the Spirit in your hearts. Before I “let you depart,” then, out of the reach of my direct influence, I would leave with you these parting words of exhortation. “My heart’s desire and prayer” for you, as Paul’s for Israel, “is that you might be saved.”‡ Yet I know that “you cannot serve the Lord.” Your hearts are sinful, and “He is an holy and a jealous God.” If any of you tell me that you are not afraid—that you hope to find it easy—it only shews me that you do not know your own hearts, and do not know what God is, or

* Josh. i. 5, 6.

† Luke x. 41.

‡ Rom. x. 1.

what sin is. Remember Peter's boasting promise, remember Peter's fall. I invite you, then, to pledge yourselves to be God's children, with the full knowledge beforehand how hard this promise is to keep. Before you can keep it, you must be strengthened with a strength not your own. Of the grace which is "sufficient for you," I do not now speak particularly. But I do most earnestly pray that none of you will undertake to serve the Lord, without a deep feeling that of yourselves you cannot obey Him for a single hour. Against all carelessness and presumption—against all ignorance and folly—against all following man's opinion, rather than the revealed will of your heavenly Father—I pray the Holy Spirit to keep and guard you. For, be very sure that, if you trifle with the ordinance now, you are sowing seed of which the harvest shall be reaped in bitter remembrances hereafter. Take heed of the stones of witness. Do not so profane God's house, by despising an holy service, as to give to every object which shall hereafter remind you of it, an accusing voice, to charge upon you the fearful guilt of insulting, mocking, and denying your God.

PRAYER.

OH GOD, we would bless Thee our God for ever and ever. "Blessed be Thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. Thou art Lord alone; Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host; the earth and all things that are therein, the seas and all that is therein, and Thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth Thee." Thou art the Lord God, who hast daily crowned us with loving-kindness and with tender mercy. Oh! hear the prayer of these Thy children, and enable them this day to choose Thee alone to be their Lord and Master. "Other Lords have had dominion over them." And still, Thou knowest they cannot find in themselves strength to serve Thee. When they would do good, evil is present with them. Vain thoughts are ever seeking to lodge within them,—light, foolish, idle thoughts,—thoughts of evil, desires of sin. Visit them, oh Lord, with Thy cleansing Spirit. Give them an earnest purpose to forsake every evil way. Give them such knowledge of their own weakness as may lead them to seek their strength in Thee. Let them know that, though they by sin have destroyed themselves, still in Thee is their help.

Thou sendest them into an evil world. Thou biddest them there to glorify Thee. Oh! grant

that in all their daily trials, Thy grace may be sufficient for them. With every temptation make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it. Suffer them not to be tried above that they are able. In all seasons of weakness and doubt and fear, when sinners entice them, and they find it hard not to consent, from the frailties and follies of youth, from the malice of Satan and the example of the world, good Lord, deliver them.

Thou hast promised in their baptism to be to them a Father. Oh enable them now to choose the portion of Thy children. Shew them that their Confirmation-promise is to be no lightly-spoken word. Prepare in them earnest minds to renew the engagements of their baptism. Make them to feel that their words are recorded in Thy book ; and so to promise, as remembering that they will rise up in witness against them, if they deny Thee their God.

Oh Lord, bless them and keep them. Lord, make Thy face to shine upon them, and be gracious unto them. Lord, lift up Thy countenance upon them, and give them peace:—

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CATECHETICAL INSTRUCTION.

I have spoken of what God promised to you in your baptism. The next point is, what was promised in your name to God.

Q.—“*What did your Godfathers and Godmothers then for you ?*”

A.—“*They did promise and vow three things in my name. First, that I should renounce the Devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh. Secondly, that I should believe all the articles of the Christian faith. And thirdly, that I should keep God’s holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of my life.*”

I shall speak to-day of the first of these promises. You promise to “renounce”—

I. *The Devil.* See Eph. ii. 1—3, 1 John iii. 8—12. By nature you are subject to him. Before you can serve God, you must “renounce” his service; that is, give him up as your master. He has *power* over you, by all evil thoughts which he puts into your minds. He has had *dominion* over you, because you have indulged them, and done his will. Jesus promises to set you free from his dominion. Are you ready to forsake him, and to follow Jesus?

II. *The pomps and vanities of this wicked world.* See 1 John ii. 15, 16, Gal. i. 4, John xvii. 11—21. By “the pomps and vanities” are meant

everything in the world which might tempt you to “set your affections on things on the earth;”* especially *for you*, the pleasures and amusements in which you might take delight. You are to “renounce” them; that is, not to say that you will have nothing at all to do with any of them, but—

1. That you will keep from everything, however pleasant, which leads you into any sin.

2. That you will not let any pleasure, however innocent, so fill your mind as to hinder you from serious thoughts.

III. The sinful lusts of the flesh. See Tit. ii. 11—14, Gal. v. 19—26. On these last verses I cannot speak particularly. But I wish you to have them in your mind, to think over them, and pray over them, that by the grace of the Holy Spirit, you may be made “pure in heart,” that you may “see God.”†

Such was the promise made for you. You are bound to keep it and bound to come now and renew it, because all these things you are already commanded by God’s law to renounce. Do not think that you can escape from them, by declining to be confirmed.

One closing word. I chose these texts, each for its own subject. Yet see how one thought runs through them all—“love.” If you desire *to be holy*, you must walk in love.

* Col. iii. 2.

† Matt. v. 8.

QUESTION PAPER.

II.

“THE DEVIL.”

“THE WORLD.”

“THE FLESH.”

1. Is it right to make promises to God?—Joshua xxiv. 22—25.

2. Why must you “renounce” the Devil?—Ephes. ii. 2.

3. How do you mean to show that you have renounced the Devil?—1 Pet. v. 8, 9.

4. Do you love the world?—1 John ii. 15.

5. How can you “renounce” the world?—John xvii. 15—17.

6. Will you “renounce” the lusts of the flesh?—Gal. v. 19—24.

7. Do you expect to find it easy to keep this promise?—Give some text as a reason of your answer.

PRAYER.

O Lord Jesu Christ, who didst come into the world to destroy the works of the Devil, destroy his works in my heart:—

O Lord, pray for me, that while in the world, I may be kept from the evil:—

O Lord, make me thine, that I may crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts:—

For Thine own Name's sake. Amen.

SELECTED ANSWERS.

H.

A. B.

1. No, not unless we intend to keep them.
 2. Because our Godfathers and Godmothers promised that we should, in our baptism.
 3. By leaving off our sins, not only our outward sins, but the thoughts that rise in our minds.
 4. Yes, but by the grace of God, I hope I shall love Him more than I have done.
 5. Not to leave off entirely the things of the world ; but if we find anything that we love more than God, to be ready and willing to give it up.
 6. Yes, by the help of God, I hope I shall be able to renounce them.
 7. No, I do not expect to find it easy ; but, by the grace of God, I hope I shall be able to do them.—
Heb. xi. 36—40.
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B. A.

1. Yes, if we intend to keep them.
 2. Because he is a wicked spirit, and goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.
 3. By remaining stedfast in the faith.
 4. I am not particularly fond of the world ; I like some of the amusements that are in it.
 5. By forsaking all the evil things of this world.
 6. Yes, with the grace of God.
 7. No, we can do nothing of ourselves.—Luke xxii. 34, 54, 60.
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C. B.

1. Yes, if we will keep that promise.
2. We “ cannot serve God and mammon.”
3. By believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. Yes, but we ought to love the Lord Jesus Christ much better.
5. By forsaking our sins, and turning unto God.
6. It is my desire to do so.
7. *Gal. v. 17.*

FEBRUARY 7TH AND 10TH.

LECTURE III.

JOHN III. 1—21.

You remember what I said to you last week, in the words of Joshua:—" *Ye cannot* serve the Lord your God." I dwell upon the words; because I wish you to feel that what you are going to do means a great deal more than merely that you intend to *try* to keep God's commandments. If this is all you think of, "*ye cannot.*" But, then, on the other hand, you may be apt to fancy that since neither you nor any one else can perfectly obey God, you need not much mind about your promise; it can only mean that you will do what you can. No! it means that you will do *more* than you can. You can do nothing; and you promise that you will do everything. How can this be? "In you, that is, in your flesh, dwelleth no good thing;"* but "it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do, of His good pleasure."† How? Because the beginning of your serving God must be, not in your doing what you can for God, but in God's having done what He pleased for you. "Herein is love,"—the beginning of all love between God and us—"not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."‡ The cold earth

* Rom. vii. 18.

† Phil. ii. 13.

‡ 1 John iv. 10.

ust be warmed by the sun's beams, before it can give back any heat. The sea, which mirrors in its depths the bright sky overhead, must first borrow from that sky the light which it reflects. So, the cold dark soul of man must be warmed and enlightened from on high, before it can return to God light for His light, or love for His love.

I have taught you to little purpose, if you do not know this. I do but "stir up your minds, putting you in remembrance" of that which all of you, I think, must *know*—which many of you, I trust, have *felt*—that in coming to God, the first step must be, not doing, but believing—not working, that God may give us wages, but accepting without work, His "free gift, everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."† The lame man did not walk that he might be healed, but was healed that he might walk—the blind that he might see, the deaf that he might hear. Oh! let this thought be always before you. You cannot keep your Confirmation-vow, by the strength of your resolutions, or the earnestness of your prayers. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ;"‡ and then, you "can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth"§ you.

Our Scripture subject for to-day agrees with that which would follow next in order from the catechism. You have promised, and are to pro-

* 2 Pet. iii. 1. † Rom. vi. 23. ‡ Acts xvi. 31. § Phil. iv. 13.

mise again, “*to believe all the articles of the Christian faith*,”—to believe “*in God the Father, who has made me and all the world ;—in God the Son, who has redeemed me and all mankind ;—in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God.*”

I cannot stop, however, to speak of the manifold mercies of the Father. “They are new unto you every morning ;”* and, if you have had *any* serious thoughts, whatever mistakes you may have made, this at least you can hardly have failed to feel—for “day unto day uttereth speech”† to tell you of it—that God has been to you a bountiful and a patient Father.

To-day I must speak of His last and greatest gift. I must remind you how, in the plan of mercy, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, have shown forth their love to man ;—the Father giving the Son—the Son laying down His life—the Spirit drawing to the Son such as should be saved. Your faith is to be fixed on this one point. For as, in the work of creation, light seems for a while to have been spread all over the face of the earth, but at last found in the sun its proper dwelling-place,‡ so the love of God does indeed shine in the meanest of our daily mercies, but the tabernacle of His glory is the Cross of Christ—it is to Christ that we are to look, to behold the Father’s love.

* Lam. iii. 23.

† Ps. xix. 2.

‡ Gen. i. 3, 4, 16.

You have read a very familiar passage. In the brief account of the brazen serpent, we have one of the most striking of all the types of our Lord.

In this passage of St. John, the verses which you should most carefully consider are vv. 14—16 and 3—5. In the 14th you are referred to an event in the history of the children of Israel, which you will find mentioned in Numbers **xxi.** 5—9. This will be our chief subject for to-day; and before we finish it, we shall find occasion to look back to our Lord's account of the new birth by water and by the Spirit.

I. Observe, *first*, the state of these Israelites. On every side they lie dying. Sin has entered into their camp, and death by sin. Fiery serpents are twining themselves round their bodies, and poisoning the blood in their veins. Old and young, parents and children together, are perishing; for God is angry, and Israel must die.

Turn now to Rom. **iii.** 9—24. Which of these two pictures is the more awful? Which is the more terrible to think of,—the blackening bodies and stiffening limbs, the distorted countenances and cries of anguish of the one—or the sin-stained hearts, the guilty lives, the unholy imaginations, of the other? Which is the more painful sight—dying bodies, or dying souls?

Alas! we should be too apt to feel touched by *the view of bodily* distress, but unmoved to sorrow

by all that we know or feel of the abounding iniquity of this wicked world. Well then; look at all these fearful sufferings—put them before your minds, till the eye almost fills with tears—and then know that these are but the faint shadow of those deeper woes, for which angels would weep now, if sorrow could enter heaven, for which souls shall mourn hereafter in the hell where hope never comes.

Are you sinners? Is the anger of God still resting upon you? Then, be sure that as no physician could heal the wound those fiery serpents made, so no skill or wisdom of man can recover your wounded souls. A worse serpent has bitten you. There seems no remedy, but you must die.

But I must not dwell on this. If there are careless hearts among you, once more would I blow in your ears the trumpet of warning. “Awake thou that sleepest.”* My proper work to-day, is to speak of comfort and hope to the convinced and trembling sinner.

II. Look, then, *secondly*, at that brazen serpent on the pole (Num. xxi. 8). When no help of man could save the dying people, God himself found out a remedy. “He had smitten, and He would bind up.”† He did not mean to destroy His people. When they had learnt in their trouble that they had no other helper, His purpose was

* Ephes. v. 14.

† Hosea vi. 1.

accomplished ; He withdrew His hand—He provided a way of escape.

Now read Eph. ii. 4—10 and Luke xv. 1—10. It is the glad tidings of the gospel, that our salvation is to be the work of the Lord himself. Be not disheartened or cast down by the sense of sin, or the consciousness of infirmity. “God is *rich* in mercy ;” not only rich in His own eternal fulness, but rich as the God of grace to *you*. His treasury is always full and always open. When your past transgressions trouble you, when a guilty conscience distresses you, remember how God visited these dying Israelites, and remember that the same God is still “*rich* in mercy.”*

III. More particularly, as our Lord himself tells us, the brazen serpent is a type of Jesus crucified. It would not be enough to tell you that God is merciful. It might give you relief for the moment, but, if your consciences are really awake, it could not keep them at rest. You would still be asking, “how *can* the just God forgive such sins as mine? How *can* the Holy One love such a sinner as I?” And you would be right. The just God *cannot* forgive sin: the Holy One *cannot* love the sinner. Yet a way has been devised by which “God justifieth the un-

* I omit here, as unnecessary, more detailed comment on the passages referred to.

godly.”* “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have eternal life.”

Read Heb. ix. 24—28. Study this passage well; and, if you find it at all hard to understand, compare it with Lev. xvi., where you have an account of the sacrifice which was the type of the atoning blood of Christ. For there is nothing more important for you, nothing for which I would more earnestly pray on your behalf, than that you should have a clear view of the great truth, that Jesus died, in order that all the sins of men might be blotted out in his blood. The brazen serpent could only be a sign of this. It was not *really* for its sake, that the sin of Israel was forgiven. But, when we say that Christ *died* for sinners, died for you, we do really mean that His death stood in place of your souls' dying; so that the only reason why you may have a hope of being saved, is not simply because God is merciful, or because Christ is good, but because He *died*, “the Lord hath *laid on him* the iniquity of us all.”†

Observe, I do not try to explain this. I might show you some things that are a little like it; such as the paying of a debt, or the bearing of a burden for you. Such figures may help to let you see *what* Christ has done for you; they cannot

† Romans iv. 5.

† Isaiah liii. 6.

tell you *how* He did it. All I know is, that God was angry, and therefore man must perish; that the Son of God became man, that as a sinless man, of His own free will "made of a woman, made under the law,"* He might "bear our sins in His own body on the tree;" that the anger due to us was so laid on Him, that "by His stripes we are healed;"† so that, not in a figure, but really and truly, "He has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."‡ Let me ask each of you, as Jesus asked of Martha: "believest thou this?"§

IV. And so I come to the *fourth* point—the way in which the Israelites were to be saved by means of the brazen serpent. They must look at it. Unless they looked, it was of no use to them, any more than untasted food to the hungry, or the light of heaven to the eye that is closed in sleep. We have a print of this scene in school for the little children; and there you see every eye turned towards the pole, except those which seem to be closed in death—even women holding up their babes, that the little ones might behold the appointed sign of health. Very likely this is not much unlike the real scene. Certainly, none were healed who did not look; while none who looked died.

Now, why did they look? Because—

1. They felt themselves dying.

* Gal. iv. 4. † 1 Pet. ii. 24. ‡ Heb. ix. 26. § John xi. 26.

2. They believed, on the word of Moses, that by looking they should be healed.

Even so must it be with you. There is salvation in Christ, but you must *look* to Him; you must “believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that you may be saved.”

To help you to bear this in mind, look at Acts viii. 26—39. Like the Eunuch, you have read about Christ’s sufferings—like him, you have had it explained to you, that He bore those sufferings for the sins of men. As he asked about baptism, you may now be asking whether you are fit to be confirmed. My answer would be like Philip’s:—“If thou *believest* with all thine heart, thou mayest.” Can you reply from your hearts:—“I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God,” and that He bore all *my* sins on the cross?

After all, however, the simplest account of faith is the truest. It is “looking unto Jesus,” as these Israelites looked to the brazen serpent. They did not stop to ask how they should look, or whether they were looking rightly. No more should you. It is not by your own faith or feelings that you are to be saved, but by the precious blood of Christ. Do not wait till you are pleased with the state of your own hearts; but at once believe on God’s word, and look unto Him as the “*Author and Finisher of your faith.*”*

* Hebrews xii. 2.

V. Perhaps you will say, "This is the very thing I need—I *cannot* believe." Oh! if indeed you feel this, bless God for so much knowledge of yourselves, and "pray without ceasing" for strength; say with the disciples, "Lord, we believe, help Thou our unbelief." For, *fifthly*, you may now see in what way we need to go back to the 5th verse of this chapter of St. John. Before you can believe, you must have a strength not your own. That strength is promised. "Ye must be born again." It is the work of the Holy Spirit to renew you to repentance. He will shew you the Son of man lifted up on the cross. If you find that, unlike these Israelites, you are slow to feel your danger, and slower still to look to the Saviour, remember the warning words: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

And not only so. Day by day, while fighting against the power of sin, the Spirit "helpeth your infirmities." Day by day, you shall have fresh cause of thankfulness to Him "who sanctifieth you and all the elect people of God."

So, then, on the whole, you have here a loving Father, a dying Saviour, an assisting Spirit. Surely, you are without excuse, if you "neglect this great salvation."

PRAYER.

“OH! LORD, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Thee, truly unto Thee belongeth righteousness, but unto us confusion of face, because we have sinned against Thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against Him; neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us. Yea, all of us have transgressed Thy law, even by departing that we should not obey Thy voice. And now, oh Lord our God, we have sinned, we have done wickedly: yet do Thou incline Thine ear, and hear; open Thine eyes, and behold all the wants of our souls; for we do not present our supplications before Thee for our righteousness, but for Thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for Thine own sake, oh our God; for these Thy children are called by Thy Name.”

They are coming to Thee now, in the name of Jesus Christ, for mercy to pardon and for grace to help. Thou hast taught them that “Thou so lovedst the world as to give Thine only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Oh! God,

enable them truly to come to Thee through Him. Shew them how He was lifted up on the cross, how He bore *their* sins in His own body on the tree. Teach them, in humble faith, to cast all their burdens upon Him who loved them to the death. Oh God, be merciful to them, for they are sinners. Make them to know and believe in Christ Jesus. Show them that but for His righteousness, they must be utterly cast away. As dying sinners, lift up their eyes unto Him, that their wounds may be healed.

Remember not Thou against them, oh Lord, the sins of their youth, nor their transgressions. Their faults and follies, their sins against Thee, against parents and teachers, against one another ; all evil thoughts, all vain and foolish words, all sinful habits—they are open, oh Lord, to Thine unerring eye. Above all, Thou hast seen the sin of their hearts, that they have not loved Thee, nor Thy word, nor Thy law. But Thou art a merciful God, and hast ordained that Thy Son Jesus Christ should be the Saviour of the world. We believe that Thou art willing to bestow Him on every penitent sinner. Lord, magnify Thy grace in the salvation of their souls, through Thy Son Jesus Christ.

Thou knowest, for Thou readeest the secrets of the heart, that of themselves they cannot believe *in Him whom* Thou hast sent. Give them new

hearts. Convert them by the power of Thy grace. Grant that, being born again of water and of the Spirit, they may see and enter into the kingdom of heaven. And so make Christ crucified to be indeed precious unto them, that in them He may see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied ; to the praise and glory of Thy name, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

QUESTION PAPER.

III.

THE LOVE OF GOD THE FATHER.

THE GRACE OF GOD THE SON.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF GOD THE HOLY GHOST.

1. What makes a sinner feel his need of God's love ?
Give a text with your answer.

2. How is Christ like the brazen serpent ?—John iii.
14 ; Num. xxi. 6—9.

3. What does the Holy Ghost do for us ?—John iii. 5 ;
John xvi. 13 ; Rom. viii. 26.

4. What is unbelief ?—Heb. iii. 19, iv. 12.

5. How is the Holy Spirit grieved or quenched ?—Eph.
iv. 30 ; 1 Thess. v. 19.

P R A Y E R .

O God the Father, who art not willing that I should
perish, teach me to love Thee, who hast first loved *me* :—

O God the Son, who didst bear my sins on the Cross,
draw me to Thyself, that I may have everlasting life :—

O God the Holy Ghost, who helpst mine infirmities,
keep me from grieving Thee by my hardness of heart :—

To the praise and glory of Thy Name.—Amen.

SELECTED ANSWERS.

III.

B. B.

1. Because he feels that he is a lost sinner. Luke xviii. 13.
 2. Because He suffered death on the cross.
 3. Sanctifieth us.
 4. Hardness of heart.
 5. By our unbelief.
-

A. C.

1. When he is convinced of sin. Ps. xxxviii. 18, 2 Sam. xii. 13.
 2. Because He was lifted up from the earth. When the Israelites looked at the serpent, they lived : if we look by faith to Jesus on the cross, we shall live also.
 3. He makes us holy—He sanctifieth us.
 4. Not believing.
 5. By sinning.
-

C. C.

1. Because he feels that he is a sinner. 1 John ii. 2.
2. Because He was lifted up on the cross, like as Moses raised up the serpent on the pole, that whosoever believeth on Him should live.
3. It guides us into all truth, likewise helpeth our infirmities, and it itself maketh intercession for us.
4. It stops men from entering into that heavenly rest.
5. By evil speaking, wrath, anger, and all evil desires.

FEBRUARY 12TH, 1848.—The most difficult part of my task is now before me. On Monday, I have to speak of the communion. What tone am I to adopt? On the one hand, I am not prepared to exact a promise to communicate, as the condition of Confirmation. Seeing as I do, that God's work, like the fructifying and growth of seed, is gradual and progressive, I cannot hold myself entitled to discourage any in whom it seems to be advancing, at whatever stage of progress they may at this moment have arrived. If the question be, Shall I come to be confirmed? My answer is, 1st, Do you *understand* what you are going to do? 2dly, Do you *mean* to do what you promise? If so, come; because it is right to make that promise. If, then, I have to deal with any heart in what may be called an *incipient* stage of the Holy Spirit's work, it is plain that by such an answer it would be encouraged to believe itself ready. But the same mind might have great difficulties about communion;—not only blameable difficulties, though even these should be dealt with tenderly—but real honest difficulties. It may need both more knowledge and more faith. Believing that the heavenly Teacher will himself perfect the lesson He has begun, I must help forward that soul. It is a lofty eminence it has to reach: may I not be well content to see it mount the first step, with the eye gazing upward

to the higher platform? Grace bringing it thus far,—for sincere and intelligent self-dedication is no *natural* work—grace will carry it on.

On the other hand, I cannot hide the truth, that it is their duty to become communicants now. As clearly as I have tried to set it before them, that “dry bones” are *commanded* to live, so clearly must I declare that living Christians are *commanded* to eat and drink in remembrance of Christ. I am neither to seek to persuade them into unwilling communicating, nor yet to let them fancy that their consciences are clear, if they do not mean to communicate.

What, then, is their duty? For, if I have this clear in my own mind, it will not be difficult to speak. I suppose, to put the communion before their eyes, as an object to be aimed at, a goal at which they are soon to arrive. The main point should be, to feel it conscientiously as a duty binding on them now, and therefore to be set about at once, according to the Apostles’ order, “Let a man examine himself, and so”—that is, as soon as he has examined himself—“let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.”*

Here, as elsewhere, the true object seems to be to engage their consciences on God’s side—to produce the impression—

* 1 Cor. xi. 28.

1. That it is a solemn matter between themselves and God alone.

2. That it needs earnest thought and prayer.

3. That these must begin at once.

4. That in confirmation they pledge themselves to immediate preparation for communion. How far that pledge should be given to *me*, is a point I shall soon have to consider.

Postscript.—MAY 10.—My views of the whole matter are only strengthened by further observation. They may be summed up in these three propositions:—

None should be confirmed, whom we could not admit to communion, *if they were willing*.

Want of willingness to communicate at once is a sin or weakness against which we must warn them, and they must strive; but *not* of itself a disqualification for Confirmation.

The less the Clergyman interferes in the way of *influence* or *authority*, as distinct from simple advice and instruction, the more healthily will the Spirit's work proceed, to make them willing in the day of God's power.

FEBRUARY 14TH AND 17TH.

LECTURE IV.

2 CHRONICLES XXX.

I have to speak to you to-day of a very important part of your engagements at this time—the intention which I think you all ought to have, of coming to partake of the holy communion, the supper of the Lord. I say, you *all* ought to have this intention; that is, if you are really ready to be confirmed, you ought also to be prepared to become communicants. I know that people often do not think so. Perhaps there are very few of you, who have had this in your minds all this time. But I hope, before you leave me to-day, that you will see that either you are not fit to be confirmed, or else you must begin at once to prepare for the holy communion.

I have now spoken to you three times. *First*, I have shown you that you need, not knowledge only, but new life from the Spirit: He must breathe upon the dry bones, that they may live. *Secondly*, I have put before you the choice you have to make between God's service and Satan's, the covenant God is willing to establish with you, the witness which every book or paper or place, which has anything to do with your Confirmation, will bear against you hereafter, if "ye deny your God." *Thirdly*, I have pointed you to Christ on the Cross, as teaching you that before you can

love and serve God, you must first be embraced by His love: you cannot please Him as children, till you have believed in Him as your reconciled Father.

Now, then, I ask you; what more could I have said—what more could I require of you—if I had been speaking of your approach to the holy communion? A renewed nature—an earnest covenant with God—a hearty faith in Christ:—without these, I do not invite you to be confirmed; with these, what hinders you to become communicants?

Let us look to the example of Hezekiah and the men of Judah. Every point of it applies to you, enforcing the great lesson, that they who would make a covenant with God must seal it by His feast of gladness.

I. You see here a penitent people, desiring to return from the error of their ways. Many long years had passed since Joel's trumpet had been blown in Zion with the note of alarm*—since Hosea's gentler voice had invited them to "come and return unto the Lord"†—since Isaiah, as an oracle of God, had taken heaven and earth to witness against the rebellious children of the Holy One of Israel.‡ Hosea and Isaiah were yet living; and at last there sat on the throne of David a king who "did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father

* Joel ii. 1.

† Hosea vi. 1.

‡ Isaiah i. 2.

had done.”* From the throne, there went forth the same word, which had been the burden of the strains of the prophets: “Oh! Israel, return unto the Lord.”† And the people *are* returning. Priests and Levites are sanctifying themselves. The service of the Lord’s house is set in order. God hath prepared the people.

II. One thing yet remains. They must keep a solemn passover. “They had not done it of a long time in such a sort as it was written.” Ungodly kings, and “a people laden with iniquity,”‡ had not cared to remember how, in “a night much to be observed,” the Lord brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt.§ But now, when with “rent hearts,”|| the whole nation is “turning unto the Lord their God,” it is plain to Hezekiah that the work is not rightly finished, till they have crowned it by an holy feast. For, in the paschal supper, they were taught to see the sign and memorial of God’s love to Israel, the seal of the covenant which He had made with Abraham for Abraham’s seed.

You see the application. Like Israel, you have often “refused and rebelled” against God. Like Israel, you are invited to return,—to bring to Him “sins as scarlet,” that they may be made “white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”¶ Your hope is, like theirs,

* 2. Chron. xxix. 2.

§ Exodus xii. 42.

† Hosea xiv. 1.

|| Joel ii. 13.

‡ Isaiah i. 4.

¶ Isaiah i. 18.

in the mercy of a covenant-keeping God. You plead the merits of "a lamb, slain from the foundation of the earth,"* "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."† Many of you are, I trust, indeed desiring to remember the great deliverance He wrought out for you. It follows, for you as for Hezekiah and his people, that all other services should be crowned by the solemn sacramental feast. For surely, it is all imperfect, till this is done. Till then, you have not fairly chosen Him for your Lord, or trusted in Him as your Saviour. There is a lingering love of the world, or a fear of the world, or unbelief, or sinful affection of some kind, which keeps you back. For what *can* there be, which is not of the nature of sin, to keep back the believing child from the table of a loving Father?

III. Yet, *Thirdly*, there must be full preparation. The feast must be kept, but not hurriedly: it is even better to miss the proper time, than to miss the proper manner of keeping it. (V. 2—4).

So, when I invite you to The Lord's Table, I bid you come, not without deep and anxious thought,—not without hearty and humble prayer. "There is room;"‡ yet none shall sit down to the supper, "not having on a wedding garment."§

Even then, in the days of signs and shadows, Hezekiah had faith enough to perceive that the

* Rev. xiii. 8. † John i. 29. ‡ Luke xiv. 22. § Matt. xxii. 12.

preparation which the Lord values most, is the spiritual preparation of the heart. (V. 18, 19). Much more now is it evident:—

1. That the outward form is vain, if the heart is not in earnest returning unto God.

2. That, if the mind is sincere and contrite, the Lord will not reject the worshipper, because he is still compassed about by many infirmities. No grace for the stony-hearted; no wrath for the penitent.

IV. So the message went through the land, and met with very varying reception in different quarters, (vv. 10—12.)

1. Ephraim, Manasseh, and Zebulun, laughed it to scorn.

2. A few out of these tribes accepted it.

3. "In Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart;" they all accepted the invitation.

Would that I could think that the whole body of you would be found like those men of Judah! Having all sinned, you are all professing now that you desire to return unto the Lord. Together, you will take upon you the solemn promise of Confirmation. Together, you will receive from the Bishop the assurance that God accepts you as His children. The Confirmation-day would bear something like its perfect fruit, if the next communion-day found you all with one consent coming forward to the table of the Lord.

But, if not so, there remains for each of you a second example. If you cannot be like one of the undivided people of Judah, at least you may copy the scattered few of Manasseh and Asher and Zebulun. Pleasant it would be, to come to the Lord's table, "with the multitude that kept holy day,"—to join at the communion-feast the whole band of those who have shared with you these preparation-hours. Yet, it is perhaps better for the trial of your own faith, to have to separate yourselves, and act for yourselves. Through the whole course of your lives, if they are to be spent in Christ's service, you must be content to have Him with you, and the world against you. Be ready, then, to begin at once. Take up, in the first act after Confirmation, the cross you have to bear through life; and be sure that in this as in every trial of your faith, you shall find that Christ's yoke is easy, when you have fairly taken it upon you, that to the willing servant His burden is marvellously light.

V. For, *fifthly*, look at the joy of Hezekiah's feast, (vv. 21—26.) Yours will be more still and silent; but it will be the stillness and the silence of deep water, which cannot leap and sparkle as the shallower stream. Joy is promised to every Christian; but it is "a joy which is *unspeakable*,"* a joy possessed by those who are "sorrowful, yet

* 1 Peter i. 8.

always rejoicing.”* I do not promise you that you shall feel your heart overflowing with delight at the time of receiving the Lord’s supper: still less, that your whole religious life shall all be in sunshine, without cloudy skies, or rainy days. It *may* be that a trembling sense of God’s awful presence at the feast may almost hinder you from tasting the sweetness of His spiritual banquet. It *must* be, that in walking with God, you are led through many dark valleys, as well as by many still waters.† But of this you are made sure, that in the darkest valley “you need not fear, for He is with you, His rod and His staff, they comfort you.” Of this you need have no doubt, that the sacramental table is one of His “green pastures;” where, whatever may be the feelings of the moment, you *shall* be fed with heavenly food, and made partakers of heavenly joy.

VI. Why? Because the Lord of heaven accepts His people’s feast. “Their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to His holy dwelling-place, even unto heaven,” (v. 27). Much more may you be sure that, in celebrating the death of the true atoning Lamb, your prayers for help and strength will not be refused. You can come, though it be with a trembling heart; for “him that cometh unto Him, He will in no wise cast out.”‡

* 2 Cor. vi. 10.

† Ps. xxiii. 2, 4.

‡ John vi. 37.

PRAYER.

OH LORD OUR GOD, who art ever merciful and gracious, who turnest not away Thy face from any who return unto Thee, give to these Thy children one heart to keep the last commandment of their dying Lord. Thou hast made ready Thy feast—a feast of good things purchased by His precious blood. Thou sendest forth Thy word and Thy Spirit, to bid them to the feast. Oh! incline their hearts to hear the invitation. Make them to come, when all things are so abundantly ready. Yea, Lord, if they are unwilling, do Thou constrain them to come in. Make them willing in the day of Thy power. Let the love of Christ constrain them to give themselves wholly unto Him; determining, in the strength of the Holy Spirit, to live henceforth not to themselves, but unto Him, who loved them and gave Himself for them.

Many, oh Lord, are the wiles of the Devil against them. Many are the snares spread for their feet. Do Thou deliver them out of them all. From all vain and carnal excuses, from coldness and worldliness of heart, from fear of man or man's judgment, do Thou, good Lord, deliver them. In their weakness, strengthen them; in their doubting hours, encourage them; from fear and trembling, from mistrust of Thy promises or

forgetfulness of Thy grace, good Lord, deliver them. Bring ever back to their minds the thought of the crucified Saviour. Make them able to apprehend with all saints the love which passeth knowledge. When their souls are cast down and disquieted within them, enable them to praise and hope in Him who is the health of their countenance and their God. Truly, they have no wedding garment. They are not fit to sit down at Thy feast. Give them, we pray Thee, the preparation of the heart. Give them the deep sense and hatred of sin. Give them grace to look closely into themselves, to "acknowledge their sin unto Thee," not hiding their iniquity. Give them a firm faith in Thy power to keep them in the world from all its evil.

Oh! Lord Jesu Christ, Thou Thyself prayest for them. Keep them in Thy love, for they are Thine. Bind them close to Thyself. Spread a table for them in the presence of their enemies. Anoint their head with oil, that their cup may run over. So, may goodness and mercy follow them all the days of their lives, that they may dwell in the house of the Lord for ever; to Thy praise, who livest and reignest, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

LITURGICAL AND CATECHETICAL INSTRUCTION.

There are four parts of the Prayer Book, in which you may find some help in thinking about the holy communion. They are—the catechism, the service for baptism, the order of confirmation, and the communion service itself. There will not be time to speak of them at full length. I can only point out the passages to which it will be best for you to attend. My chief purpose is to show that you can have no cause for staying from the communion, for fear of binding yourselves to what you cannot perform; because you are bound already from your birth—you have acknowledged it at your baptism, and will bind yourselves again at Confirmation.

I. First in order comes the service for the baptism of infants, the only form of baptism with which you have had to do. Here, the chief places to look to, are

1. The gospel and the exhortation which follows it.

2. The promises of your Godfathers and Godmothers.

3. The words spoken at the time of “signing you with the sign of the cross.”

4. The last exhortation.

Along with these, you should take—

5. Those four questions of the catechism, beginning with “*How many parts are there in a sacrament ?*”

From all these, you see that if you claim the promise God has made you of being your Father, you are also already dedicated to His service, bound by a promise, as well as encouraged by an invitation.

Take especially the *third* of these passages.—“*We receive this child into the congregation of Christ’s flock, and do sign him with the sign of the cross, in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under His banner against sin, the world, and the Devil, and to continue Christ’s faithful soldiers and servants unto his life’s end.*”

Observe, you are to be *soldiers* as well as servants. No serving Christ, without also fighting for Him. So St. Paul :—2 Tim. ii. 1—13. As, elsewhere, he calls our Lord “the *Captain* of our salvation.”

II. Look next at the confirmation service.

1. The preface.

2. The question put to you.

3. The Bishop’s blessing over you.

The *second* of these is the most important part of the service. The first gives the reason for asking you that question ; in the third, the Bishop prays that you may be enabled to keep to the answer you have given. So, you are not then

making any new engagement ; you are not binding yourselves to anything which before this you are free either to do or not to do, as you pleased. You have only to “*renew*,” “*ratify*,” “*confirm*,” and “*acknowledge*” the engagements of your baptism, which are binding on you, whether you renew them or not. What is required of you, therefore, is all that would be required if you were going now to be baptised. What is that ? The catechism tells you “*repentance*” and “*faith*.” Or, better than any words of man, the Holy Spirit tells you by the mouth of St. Peter in one place, and of St. Philip in another. See Acts ii. 37—47, viii. 26—40.

Still, you see, the same great truth runs through every part of the teaching of our Church in the Prayer Book :—“Ye are not your own.” You must answer, if you refuse any part of Christ’s service, for despising Him who has called and engaged you already to be His soldier and servant.

III. Turn, lastly, to the communion service ; and take with it the remaining questions of the catechism. In the service itself, look

1. To the confession, with the short exhortation, “*Ye that truly*,” &c. There you are told what is required for communion. It is easy to see that everything here mentioned is simply a part of the true Christian character. Very much *the same things* are required for baptism. Com-

pare with this, the last answer of the catechism.

It may be well, too, to remark that it is plain that those who are expected to come to the communion are not persons who have become perfectly free from sin. Every time they come, they have the new sins to confess, "which they from time to time most grievously have committed."

2. Next, take the *second* of the two exhortations to be read in giving notice on the Sunday before. Compare it with Matt. xxii. 1—14. It sets before you Christ's earnest invitation and command, which it is a joy to accept, and sin to disobey. So, in the days of the apostles, every baptised believer was also a communicant.

3. Lastly, we have to consider the *first* exhortation, and the other to be read "at the time of the celebration of the communion." With these we should take 1 Cor. xi. 23—34. At present, however, I do not mean to speak of any difficulties you may have in your minds. There will, I hope, be time to think of these, after the Confirmation, when I shall invite you to continue your attendance here, as candidates for communion. In the mean time, I have only two short words to say.

1. St. Paul does not say one word to frighten any sincere and anxious heart.

2. If you are *not* sincere, your Confirmation may be as dangerous as communion could be.

Consider these things, and may "the Lord give you a right understanding."

*Greatly do I desire to see *you* at the Lord's table, that we may keep a feast like Hezekiah's. As he must have felt, when he saw the "great congregation" gathered together for the passover, so shall I feel, if I see that to you, as to Judah, is given "one heart" to keep the feast with joy. Then, in heart as well as in words, would I bless you in the name of the Lord; and my "voice shall be heard, and the prayer come up to His holy dwelling-place, even unto heaven."*

* See Note C.

QUESTION PAPER.

IV.

BAPTISM.

CONFIRMATION.

COMMUNION.

1. Are you glad that you were baptised ? And why ?
2. How must you live, if you are to be Christ's "soldier and servant"?—2 Tim. i. 8 ; 1 Tim. vi. 11, 12 ; 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.
3. Are you "ashamed" of Christ ? Or, are you willing to "confess him before men" ?—Matt. x. 32, 33.
4. Why should Christians partake of the Lord's supper ?
—Matt. xxvi. 26—28 ; John vi. 53—56.
5. Do you mean, after being confirmed, to come to the communion ? If not, what is your reason ?

 PRAYER.

O Lord God, I thank Thee that Thou hast promised in baptism to be a Father unto me. I have been too often an undutiful and disobedient child ; I have strayed from Thy ways ; I have forgotten Thy love. But now, I come to Thee ; I desire to be a soldier and servant of Christ. Oh ! strengthen me for the good fight of faith ; make me able to confess Him before men ; teach me to remember Him, and bring me with an humble heart to his communion-table.

For His own Name's sake. Amen.

SELECTED ANSWERS.

IV.

A. D.

1. Yes ; because it is the sign of regeneration or new birth, and because we have the promises of forgiveness and of adoption to be sons of God.

2. To be constantly fighting and striving against sin.

3. I earnestly pray that I may not be ashamed of Christ, and that I may not deny Him.

4. Because Christ hath said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

5. I am afraid that I am unworthy ; I am afraid of eating and drinking damnation to myself, and the words grow more fearful.

C. D.

1. Yes. John iii. 5—7, Mark xvi. 16.

2. I must live soberly, righteously, and godly, all the days of my life.

3. (1) No.

(2) Yes, and I am willing to be a child of His.

4. Because it is the Lord's will, and must be done.

5. No ; not because my sins are too great.

NOTE C, PAGE 96.—In this Lecture, I have dealt with the subject of the Communion, chiefly as an act of *obedience*. This seemed the healthiest mode of treating it in the first instance; since any expectation of blessing or pleasure in the ordinance, apart from the distinct realization of the binding authority of the command, would evidently be unscriptural and unsafe. Speaking to the candidates before me, I knew that the danger was on the side of careless or timorous rejection, rather than of presumptuous approach. In many parishes, it may be different, and the tone of address would be proportionably changed. In my own, I felt it to be desirable to reserve for private interviews the more distinct consideration of the blessings to be enjoyed. I subjoin, by way of supplement to the present lecture, two skeletons of lectures delivered to communion-classes since the Confirmation. I copy precisely from my notes, retaining the Greek quotations, for the sake of conciseness.

LECTURE A.—MARCH 16, 1848.

1 Cor. xi. 17—34.

I am to-day to explain this passage to you verse by verse.

Observe—

1. Why he writes (vv. 18—22)—Divisions—Irreverence.
2. To what purpose (vv. 28—34)—Self-examination—Reverence.
3. By what argument (vv. 23—27)—Greatness of ordinance.
4. Not a word about previous sinfulness.
5. *ἐνοχος ἐσται. κ. τ. λ.* (v. 27)—“If you despise the ordinance, you despise Christ. It is to Him that you show contempt.

6. δοκιμαζέτω (v. 28)="Try himself as gold in the fire" (1 Pet. i. 7). Never used for "judging," so as to condemn or acquit. Only "let a man know his own intentions."*

7. ἀναξίως="Unworthily of the sacredness of the rite," that is, "irreverently," as these Corinthians had done. No reference to personal meetness; far less sinlessness.

8. κρίμα (v. 29)="Judgment." (See Rom. xii. 2.) No ground for the word damnation, as we use it now, or for the idea of unworthy communicating being on unpardonable sin. Simply a sin, and as such incurring God's wrath.

9. μὴ διακρίνων.="Not perceiving or feeling the spirituality of the ordinance."

10. παιδενόμεθα (v. 32.) This is when we are judged, that is, have incurred the κρίμα. No vindictive anger, but fatherly *chastisement*.

So, on the whole,

I. Examination respects our deep sense of the solemnity of the service, and of Christ's presence in it.

II. Unworthy communicating is thoughtless and insincere.

III. All such incur God's anger, which, as in other cases, may be turned away on repentance.

LECTURE B.—MARCH 30, 1848.

Matt. xxii. 1—14: Luke xiv. 15—24.

I do not mean to say that this feast *means* the Lord's supper. It rather means that, of which the Lord's supper is the outward sign. The real feast is—

1. Believing in Jesus here.

* I might have added, as I believe I did in delivery, that there is no hint of its being their duty to forego the sacrament, till they were *more fit*.

2. Beholding Jesus in heaven.

But then, the Lord's supper was ordained, on purpose that it might keep us in mind of that heavenly feast. All, who are invited to the one, are invited to the other also. All who desire to partake of the one must desire to partake of the other. I intreat you to keep this in view. All believers are ready for communion, and the communion is ready for all believers.

I have been encouraging you to come to it; and yet here is mention made, both of some who are unworthy, and of one who was rejected for want of fitness for the feast. We will look at these two points on the one side, and then at two points on the other side of the subject.

1. Matt. xxii. 8—Comp. x. 11—14—Acts xiii. 45, 46. *Ὀὐκ ἄξιτοι.*—Unwilling to come. They made themselves unworthy by unbelieving refusal of the invitation.

2. Vv. 11—14—Comp. Eph. iv. 20—24—Col. iii. 12, 13—Rom. xiii. 14.—You see here what the wedding garment is, viz. personal holiness. But then, according to the well-known custom of the time, he who had no *ἐνδυμα γάμου* must have *refused* it. He profanely despises holiness of heart.

3. Luke xiv. 21—23.—Comp. Rev. xxii. 17—Isaiah iv. i.—The invited guest=ὁ θέλων. No other qualification.

4. Vv. 18—20.—*παραιτεῖσθαι*.—"To beg off," seeking a pretext, not sincerely. Mark this. It seems to be implied that none of them had any good reason. They all looked out for *excuses*. I believe it is so now. When you find any reason for not coming to *Christ* at once, be sure it is only an excuse; you do not want to come. So, with the *communion*. Many pretexts. One is afraid—another needs more knowledge—a third feels

too sinful—a fourth has no time for preparation—a fifth does not like coming alone, &c. All the while, in the heart lie the true reasons. Either (1) you have no desire, or (2) you love sin, or (3) you are ashamed of Jesus before men.

Remember !—

(1) “ If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be accursed.”

(2) “ The wages of sin is death.”

(3) “ Whosoever is ashamed of me before men, of him will I be ashamed.”

FEBRUARY THE 21st.

LECTURE V.

I CORINTHIANS IX. 24—27.

I meet you to-day for the last time before the Confirmation. You are now, as it were, brought to the starting-point of your course. You have been in some degree trained for the race. And now, my parting word is—"Run"—"So run that ye may obtain."

Our Scripture passage is short and simple. St. Paul was writing to the people of Corinth, who were well used to the sight of races. Great races were held every year at Corinth, chiefly by men on foot; and great crowds came together from all parts of Greece, to see those races run. The prize was only a crown of pine-leaves; they ran for the honour of being called the conqueror. From this custom, he draws a very striking figure, to describe the Christian's life. It is a race which must be run by every soul that shall be saved; the course is the world, the prize everlasting glory.

I. *First*, you must be in motion. You cannot stand still. There is no slumbering and sleeping, no sloth nor indolence, in the life of a Christian. When you say that you will serve Christ, you mean that from this time you will try to feel that with each day there is a day's work to be done *for* Christ—that you have to get on in the road by

which you are to reach God at last. "Ah! but," you will say, "we have other things to look to, other things to fill up our time with, things of this present world, which must be done. Many of us are servants, or may soon be so; almost all of us have either parents, or masters, or mistresses, whom we *must* please and obey." Well: it is in pleasing and obeying them, that you are to do Christ's work also, and run your Christian race. He does not bid you leave your common duties undone, that you may win the prize he offers. If you do not do them well, you cannot be his disciples. The rule is, "Whether ye *eat* or *drink*, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God."* So you find, in many of the epistles, the most exact rules for servants and masters, for children and parents, for husbands and wives;—every one, in whatever station he may be, being expected to show his love to God, by doing better than others all that in that station is given him to do. See Eph. v. 21—vi. 9, Col. iii. 18—iv. 1, 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2, Tit. ii. 1—10, 1 Pet. ii. 13—iii. 7.

So let it be with you. Remember that the fruit of all true religion is to be *seen*, not *heard*; not in loud *talking* about it, but in quiet *doing* of "the things which are lawful and right." I shall think it but a poor harvest for all the seed sown here, if I see or hear of you, that you pray much

* 1 Cor. x. 31.

and read your Bibles, and go to Church, but are proud, vain, or giddy—slothful, careless, or disobedient—quarrelsome, passionate, or ill-tempered—or, still more, if it could ever be said of you that you were guilty of anything like uncleanness, dishonesty, or falsehood. It is in these things—and quite as much in what seem the smallest of them—that you are to “let your light shine before men.”* In watching over the little faults which are apt to steal into daily duties, you will make full use of the grace given you in your hearts. If you set to work in a humble spirit, only wishing to please God in all things, you will find that it helps instead of hindering you in the duties which are plainly religious, such as prayer, and reading of the Bible. For there is nothing too low or too small for the working of the Holy Spirit. As the sun’s light shines as brightly on the violet as on the oak—as the butterfly’s wing was shaped by the same almighty power which formed the whale or the elephant, so the influence of the Spirit is seen in sanctifying *little* things, till the whole life is leavened with the leaven of love to God.

I need not now speak more particularly. Whatever remains, may be best said to you one by one. In the meantime, let me leave with you two examples of faithfulness to God in duty to man;—

* Matt. v. 16.

the one in a high—the other in a lowly station. I mean Daniel (Dan. vi. 5) and the captive maid of Israel, who waited on Naaman's wife, (2 Kings v. 2, 3.)

On the other hand, you will not forget, while “careful and cumbered about many things,” that “one thing is needful.”* However much you may have to do or think of, there is always—there *must* always be found—time to “work out your own salvation.”† Your chief concern must be, to save your own soul. Of this, again, I shall speak more particularly in private.

II. But, *secondly*, observe, you must *run*. Walking will not be enough. No sluggish racer ever won the race. If the soul is worth thinking about at all, it is worth striving for, with all your might and strength.

III. And, *thirdly*, you must go on running. No stopping on the way—no loitering for pleasant company—no looking round — no pausing for breath or rest. “There remaineth a rest”‡ for you, when the race is over. Meanwhile, time presses; run, run on, run always. The racer must have no eyes for any object but the prize, no ears for any sound except the shouts which urge him on. So, be sure that your race cannot prosper unless you steadily shut the eyes and ears of your hearts against everything which might

*Luke x. 42.

†Phil. ii. 12.

‡Hebrews iv. 9.

make you stop. If you are tempted by the pleasures of sin, if worldly companions try to lead you astray, think of all these pleasures as being like beautiful flowers or grassy slopes on the racer's path. Let others linger to gather the flowers, or bask in the sunshine; you cannot, for you have a race to run, which a moment's delay may lose.

Here it may be well to speak of a kind of hindrance which you might not be so ready to suspect, as the follies of the world. I mean the too common habit of rambling from church to chapel, as fancy takes you,—not caring where you go, so as you “hear good.” The effect of this is sure to be, to unsettle all your feelings, to give you “itching ears,”* and light, irreverent minds. At the best, you will come to think more how you like the sound of what you hear, than what help you have got to keep the law, and love the truth. If, then, you desire to run the race steadily, you must take your fixed place at church, and let that place never be empty. By coming to Confirmation, I understand that you profess to belong to the Church of England. I trust it is your purpose and your prayer to be kept through life consistent members of this portion of Christ's flock to which you are about to be joined. For sure I am, that if in spirit and in truth you will worship through her forms the God who hears, not words,

*2 Tim. iv. 3.

but the praying heart, you will never need variety to help you to approach His throne. And if sometimes you are impatient of her calm, grave, sober tone, remember that it is not the excited fancy, but the contrite spirit, with which God is always well-pleased. When the sun's rays strike on the foam below the waterfall, they produce a rainbow-like variety of beauteous colours. All bright and glorious ; but no reflection of heaven, till you get to the still water, where the light is clear and unbroken. So let your feelings be—deep, earnest, and still, that the light of God's truth may not be distorted by human fancies ; that there may be no mistaking of mere natural excitement for the working of the Spirit of God. And, if they are such, then I am sure that in the calm, devotional strain of our Church-service—imperfect though it be, like every work of man—you will find fit expression for all your deepest thoughts, fit channels to carry up to heaven your warmest desires. While cherishing the spirit of brotherly affection towards the members of other churches, we may yet rejoice that God's providence places us within the bosom of our own. Next Sunday you will acknowledge it as the Church of your baptism. In that Church, I trust you will be thankful to live and die.

IV. *Fourthly*, these men made great preparations for the race. They “were temperate in all

things," that their bodies might be in a fit state for running. On this point, I will make but this one remark. If you ever find that you are not getting on well in your race, you may be sure that the cause is some unmortified sin. The soul is not properly trained, and therefore cannot run. Examine yourselves ; and see what "secret fault"* there is, like Achan in the camp of Israel,† which causes God to seem to withdraw from you His grace and help.

V. *Lastly*, you see the prize. No perishing garland, or crown of withering leaves, but the incorruptible crown of eternal glory. Is it not worth running for ? Is it not worth denying yourselves for ? Is it not worth while to bear all the crosses of life, if at last you are to receive "the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give at that day unto all them that love His appearing" ?‡

So now, it only remains for me to invite you to the Confirmation. I have not left much on this point to be said to-day. You have all, I think, been made to feel that it is, or ought to be, a very serious matter. If there are any of you, who have not yet prayed earnestly for grace to make and keep your vow, it must be almost too late now for any words of mine to stir you up to repentance. To all such, I simply say, Beware ! Remember

* Ps. xix. 12. † See Josh. vii. 13. ‡ 2 Tim. iv. 8.

with whom you have to do. If you have so long hardened your hearts, and grieved the Spirit, at least keep back from this presumptuous sin. Do not give yourselves this to think of, hereafter, that you mocked the Almighty in His holy place, and in His solemn service took His name in vain!

My course is clear. Wherever I see that you are not in earnest, I cannot help you to come to speak a lie to God. Where I am doubtful what you really feel, I shall set before you once more, in private, what it is you are about to do; and then it must rest between God and your own consciences. *I cannot make the choice for you. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve."* Only, remember that it is on your own heads that the sin rests, if you come unprepared. I judge of your knowledge, your professions, and the little I can see of your outward conduct. God alone judgeth the heart.*

And now, my closing words shall be of pleasanter sound. I hope I speak to many who are of single mind in this great event of your lives—who think as they speak, and tell me what they really feel. Towards you, I shall not express my feelings in any words of my own. Read them in the words of St. Paul. (Phil. i. 1—11.) As he felt for his Philippian brethren, even so would I desire to feel for each one of you, in whom I think I can

*See Note D. Page 121.

see the marks of the Holy Spirit's working. All that I have to say is here. Or all may be summed up in the one word, "Run."

RUN—for God has called you.

RUN—for Death is behind you.

RUN—for Christ waits to crown you.

RUN—for the Spirit strengthens you.

RUN—for Eternity is at hand.

RUN—in sure hope and faith ; for never did the weakest candidate enter the course, with a true desire to run, but He who is all-merciful and all-wise kept that weak racer to the end.

"Now to Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before His presence with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever." Amen.

PRAYER.

OH GOD, our strength and our hope, once more we pray Thee, help these Thy children to make and keep their Confirmation vow. They come to Thee as those whom Thou hast been leading by the hand. They were born in sin: Thou receivedst them into Thy Church. They were dead in sin: Thou gavest them life. They could not serve Thee: Thou hast made them a willing people in the day of Thy power. They were sore wounded by the enemy: Thou badest them look to Jesus on the cross, that looking they might be healed. And now, oh Lord, finish Thine own work. Forsake not the lambs of Thy flock, whom Thou hast been leading to the green pastures. Give them more grace for the solemn service that is before them. Strengthen their weakness. Increase their faith. Deepen their sense of sin. Quicken within them the spirit of prayer; that through this week they may indeed pray without ceasing for a double portion of Thy Spirit's influence to be poured out upon them.

Make them ready to run the Christian race, not as uncertainly, but in the sure hope of the crown of glory which fadeth not away. Oh! teach them to lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset them, that they may run with patience this race that is set before them. From all *guilt burdening* the conscience, from all sin lin-

gering in the heart, from the love of anything unlawful, from the desire of anything forbidden, good Lord, deliver them. From the follies of youth, from the example of evil companions, from every danger which may meet them in their worldly callings, good Lord, deliver them. From all impurity in heart or word or deed, from pride and vanity and every high thought, from anger, sullenness, impatience, and discontent, good Lord, deliver them. From all dishonesty and unfaithfulness, from all falsehood and deceit, from self-will, stubbornness, and disobedience, good Lord, deliver them. In their chambers and in their families, among companions or fellow-servants, in the world's business and the world's pleasures, in the reading of the Word and in public prayer, good Lord, deliver them. With all spiritual knowledge of Thy truth, with an earnest love of the Redeemer, with the sanctifying influences of Thy Holy Spirit, good Lord, enrich them. As children with their parents, as servants with their masters, as friends, neighbours, and companions, good Lord, guide their steps. In all time of their tribulation, in all time of their wealth, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, good Lord, deliver them.

Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done

in earth as it is in heaven ; give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us ; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, the power, the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. Amen.

QUESTION PAPER.

V.

THE DAYS BEFORE CONFIRMATION.

THE DAY OF CONFIRMATION.

THE DAYS AFTER CONFIRMATION.

1. Why do you wish to be confirmed ?
2. Do you mean to attend Church regularly, and to avoid all wandering thoughts while you are there ?
3. Have you been at Church every Sunday since you gave in your name for Confirmation ?
4. Have you had much serious thought about the questions I have given you ?
5. Have you used the prayers at the end of each paper ? Which of them have you found most suitable to your own feelings ?
6. Do you feel that the last month has been useful to you ?
7. How do you mean to spend the evening of the Confirmation day ?
8. Mention any text which you wish to have in your heart on that day.
9. Will you, from this time, avoid all bad company—all sinful customs—all rambling at night—all public-houses ?
10. Will you keep a watch over every word you speak ?
11. Will you watch over your temper towards those who are *over* you, *under* you, or *equal* to you ?
12. Will you resist all proud thoughts—all vanity—all love of dress ?
13. Will you try to be kind and gentle, "*thinking* no evil," and "forgiving them that trespass against you" ?
14. Will you be very careful to speak the exact truth in all things ?
15. Will you attend for further instruction, to prepare you to receive the Lord's Supper ?
16. What text would you choose, to express your feelings on the whole matter ?

SELECTED ANSWERS.

V.

A. E.

1. Because I have taken upon myself the solemn vows which were promised for me at my baptism, and am made a member of Christ's Church.
2. I hope that I may be able to do so.
3. Yes. 4. Yes; very much.
5. Yes:—the third.
6. Yes, I hope it has been a great deal of use.
7. With reading and prayer, and meditating upon the solemn vows I have taken upon myself.
8. Ps. cxix. 117. 9. Yes, I will try to do so.
10. Yes, I pray that I may.
11. I cannot do that of myself, unless God gives His Holy Spirit, to help me to conquer such sins that I am so very apt to commit.
12. Yes, I will if I can.
13. Yes, if the Lord will be my Helper.
14. Yes, if I can be able to overcome the temptation.
15. Yes, I will. 16. Ps. lxxiii. 26.

B. C.

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1. That I may be united to the Church.
 2. Yes, if I am able to attend.
 3. No, I have not been every Sunday, for I have not been able to go.
 4. Yes, I have thought about them.
 5. The last prayer has been most suitable to my feelings.
 6. It has been very useful to me.

7. In reading and studying.
 8. "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man can do unto me."
 9. Yes, I have not been custom of going to such places.
 10. Yes, by God's help.
 11. I will, by God's grace enabling me to believe in Him.
 12. I would wish to be in a plain way.
 13. I have not any evil in my heart against any one.
 14. I will; for they that speak the truth are the Lord's delight.
 15. Yes, if my health permits me.
 16. Heb. xii. 1, 2.
-

C. E.

1. Because it will be a good thing for me.
2. I mean to attend Church regularly.
3. I have been at Church every Sunday, excepting one.
4. I have had serious thoughts about the questions you have given me.
5. I have used the prayers at the end of the papers. I have found the first most suitable to my feelings.
6. I feel that the last month has been very useful to me.
7. In serious meditation upon what I have been promising.
8. Rom. viii. 37. 9. I will try to avoid all these sins.
10. I will try. 11. I will watch over my temper.
12. I will try. 13. I will do my best endeavour.
14. I will be very careful to speak the truth.
15. I will try to attend. 16. Rom. x. 10.

I subjoin one complete specimen of the answers, printed *verbatim*, though not exactly *literatim*.

Q. III. 5.—“ *When is the Holy Spirit grieved or quenched ?* ”

A. B. When we begin to serve God for a while, and then leave it off again, and go to our old sins again.

A. C. By sinning.

A. D. When the Holy Spirit is striving with any heart, and the heart tries to put to silence the voice of the Spirit, it is then that the Spirit of God is quenched, as when the Spirit of God is striving with us, and we sin willingly against God, He is then grieved or quenched.

A. E. By committing sins that we know, when the Spirit tells us they are wrong, we put them [Him] to silence, and take entirely out of our minds [what He tells us.]

A. F. By committing sins that we know.

A. G. He is grieved because we do not obey.

A. H. Through the sinful lusts of the flesh.

A. J. By sin.

A. K. With giving way to sin.

B. A. When He is trying to make us feel the love of God, and we do not feel inclined to listen to Him.

B. B. By our unbelief.

B. C. By giving way to temptation.

B. D. By rebelling against it.

B. E. By giving place to the Devil.

B. F. If we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit will never be quenched.

B. G. By forsaking Him.

B. H. By giving place to the Devil.

C. B. By our infirmities.

C. C. By evil speaking, wrath, anger, and all sinful desires.

C. D. By going on in our wickedness, when the Spirit strives with us, and we do not submit to it. 1 Thes. v. 4.

C. E. By putting away all wickedness from us.

C. F. When He is angry, all our days are gone. With the sins of our hearts.

C. G. By forsaking Him.

C. H. By corrupt communication proceeding out of our mouth.

C. I. By our infirmities.

C. K. By resisting its workings or strivings, and neglecting His warning.

C. L. By putting away all wickedness.

C. M. By forsaking Him.

TEXTS

CHOSEN IN ANSWER TO Q. V. 8, 16.

- A. C. Ps. cxix. 173; Ps. li. 10.
 A. D. Ps. xvii. 3; 2 Cor. v. 14.
 A. E. Ps. cxix. 117; Ps. lxxiii. 26.
 A. F. Matt. xxvi. 41; Prov. viii. 17.
 A. G. 1 Cor. ix. 24, 25; Heb. x. 35.
 A. H. Ps. li. 11; Eph. ii. 8.
 A. J. Ps. li. 9, 10; 2 Tim. i. 9.
 A. K. 1 Cor. i. 8; 1 Cor. ix. 24.
-

- B. A. Matt. iv. 10; 1 Cor. ix. 24, 25.
 B. B. Heb. vi. 2, 3; Ps. xv. 4.
 B. C. Heb. xiii. 7; Heb. xii. 1, 2.
 B. D. Matt. iv. 10.
 B. E. Heb. iv. 11; Isaiah lvii. 21.
 B. F. Acts ii. 42; 1 Cor. ix. 24, 25.
 B. G. Ps. cxlii. 7.
 B. H. Heb. iv. 11; Isaiah lvii. 21.
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- C. B. Phil. i. 1—6; John xiv. 1—6.
 C. C. Ps. cxii. 1, 2, 6; 1 Cor. xi. 27—29.
 C. F. Acts viii. 17, 18; 1 Tim. vi. 11, 12.
 C. G. Ps. cxlii. 7.
 C. J. Tit. iii. 7; Phil. i. 4—15.
 C. L. 1 Cor. ix. 24; Mark vi. 50.

NOTE D, PAGE 110.—Most earnest clergymen have probably felt a desire to go farther than is here contemplated, in the way of judging the qualifications of candidates. Some may even hold themselves bound to ascertain that they are truly converted persons; and, indeed, if we once assume the office of scrutinising the heart at all, I do not see how we can stop short at any lower point. I am, however, very strongly of opinion that, in so doing, we transgress our proper province. Not to dwell on the uncertainties of human judgment—not to insist on the manifest evil produced by every error on the charitable side—I deny that the task is in itself one for which the Christian Ministry is either fitted or intended. To sum up the matter briefly, it savours of sacerdotalism. Between God and man's conscience, on true Protestant principles, no human authority can interpose. We stand as evangelists by the sinner's *side*, to point out the way to the gate at which he has to knock. We have no warrant to stand *between* him and the gate, to pronounce *ex cathedra* whether he may go on. Counsel and exhortation are ours; judgment is the Lord's.

This is not the place to reason out so grave an argument. It may be enough to have called the attention of my younger brethren to this view of a question, on which the first impulse might lead them in an opposite direction. I am sure that, if they feel able to adopt it, it will relieve many a sensitive mind from a weight of self-imposed responsibility. On the other hand, I think it will be found that candidates, who might otherwise be tempted to aim no higher than the minister's approval, will feel constrained, when thrown back on their own consciences, to listen to what conscience has to say;—will see all the more clearly that they are in the presence of

God, because the view is not intercepted by the figure of an earthly priest.

For, surely, we know too well, how congenial to the human heart is the priestly element in religion. Of all things, the natural man dreads being left alone with God. Of all impressions, it is the most needful to be produced, that no man can deliver his brother. Let us teach this, if by any means we may, to our Confirmation candidates; that future generations may not be found hanging in the hour of death on the mere words of a minister, as though his voice could charm away from the dying soul the terrors of an angry God.

Of course, I do not mean that we are to admit indiscriminately. Gross ignorance must always exclude, as leaving no materials for conscience to work on. Still more clearly, open sin; or, what is more common, evident carelessness. In both these cases, we do but give utterance to what is in the heart already, when we tell the candidate that he is unfit to approach the ordinance. It is quite another matter, when knowledge is sufficient, and there are outward signs of sincerity, to try to penetrate below the veil into the *arcana* of spiritual feeling. With great caution, this may sometimes be permissible, for purposes of *advice* and *assistance*; and sometimes, of course, it is superseded by the free outpouring of overburdened hearts. But far be it from us to insist on probing those wounds which the heavenly Physician alone can heal. Spiritual reserve is no small ornament, after all, of juvenile religion. If carried to excess, it may deprive the soul of needful comfort and help. Yet, even so, it is better than any approach—more easily made than may be supposed—to the unhealthy excitement of a confessional.

I must add that, even in respect of outward signs—much more of inward feeling—it needs the largest charity to qualify any one to judge of another's sincerity. If not carefully on our guard, we shall be in continual danger of imposing as of necessary obligation our own views of what is suitable in Christian practice, or essential in spiritual experience;—views which we may fairly make the theme of exhortation, but which we have no right to set up as the touchstones of true or false profession.

Take, for example, the question of amusements. No serious heart doubts that unrestrained indulgence is destructive of spiritual feeling. No thoughtful mind, on the other hand, can fail to perceive how hard it is to draw a line between the lawful and the unlawful, which shall commend itself at once to reason and to conscience. Arrange them in a descending scale, and we shall find it more than difficult to say, at what step we shall interpose our veto. Yet God forbid that we should put all all on the same level. True, into the most innocent, the spirit of worldly-mindedness may find entrance. It does not follow, however, as professors of the school of Demas would fain persuade us, that inward feeling is everything, and outward practice indifferent. There is a distinction between things forbidden and things permissible. The principle of that distinction, we are bound to hold high, emblazoned on the standard we lift up before the youthful soldiers of Christ. Nor, as their counsellors and guides, can we forbear to point out where it is that, in our judgment, they would begin to tread on forbidden ground. But then, they have a personal responsibility as well as we. They must answer before God, not whether they adopted our views, but

whether they earnestly watched and prayed to be kept from displeasing Him. Let us jealously refuse the office of a judge. Christ has not entrusted it to us. We have no "dominion over their faith, but are helpers of their joy; for by faith they stand."

I pause, not from want of matter, but from fear of undue prolixity. "I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what I say."

FEBRUARY 22D, 1848.—The ploughing and sowing is over: this week must be devoted to harrowing in the seed. Each candidate is appointed to come to me at a fixed hour, so as to allow from half an hour to three quarters for each interview. Out of 48 names given in, there have been :—

| | |
|---------------------|-------|
| Declined | 3 |
| Withdrawn | 6 |
| Remaining— | |
| Class A | 12 |
| " B | 11 |
| " C | 16—39 |
| | <hr/> |
| | 48 |
| | <hr/> |

Of the 39 remaining, one will probably be unable, from illness, to attend the Confirmation. Of the rest, I shall probably reject from 3 to 6, leaving from 32 to 35 to be confirmed.

My examinations will vary according to cases. In respect of the great majority, I am already satisfied as to knowledge and general disposition. With these, my object will be, to ascertain how far they have profited by the preparation-weeks, and give such advice on points of detail as individual circumstances may seem to require. To those with whose characters I have previous acquaintance, from knowledge of them in school,

such advice may be pointed and personal. To others, it must be more general than I could wish, my opinion of what they need being formed on comparatively slight and imperfect data. Such must ever be the advantage of school experience.

FEBRUARY 26TH, 1848.—I have had great satisfaction in my interviews, and look forward to the ordinance of to-morrow—though of course not without fear and trembling—yet with no small measure of hope. Both knowledge and feeling have decidedly advanced; and though several are still in rudimental stages, I trust there is hardly one, of all who are to be confirmed to-morrow, who will not, to-night, make it the subject of prayer for the Holy Spirit's help. I have rejected three, who had evidently no right apprehension of the ordinance. There remain 35, of whom there is only one whose knowledge is doubtful, and six or seven of whom I have not satisfactory evidence that they know what it is to serve God with the heart. Even these, however, appear to be sincere in their intention of keeping their promise, *as far as they understand it*.

I classify them thus, according (1) to *knowledge*, and (2) to *earnestness*.

CLASS I.

(1)

| | |
|-------|-------|
| A. A. | A. E. |
| A. B. | B. B. |
| A. C. | C. C. |
| A. D. | C. K. |

(2)

| | |
|-------|-------|
| A. A. | B. C. |
| A. D. | B. I. |
| B. B. | C. N. |

CLASS II.

| | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| A. F. | B. C. | A. E. | B. D. |
| A. G. | C. B. | A. F. | C. C. |
| A. J. | C. D. | A. K. | C. O. |
| A. K. | C. E. | A. L. | |
| B. A. | C. H. | | |

CLASS III.

| | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| A. H. | B. I. | A. C. | B. K. |
| A. L. | C. A. | A. H. | C. A. |
| B. D. | C. F. | A. J. | C. B. |
| B. E. | C. G. | A. M. | C. D. |
| B. F. | C. K. | B. A. | C. E. |
| B. G. | C. M. | B. E. | C. G. |
| | | B. F. | C. H. |
| | | B. G. | C. J. |
| | | | C. K. |

Those omitted are, in each respect, barely passable.*

I have only further to record my impression that of all the means taken to impress their minds, there is none which has done more to

* If it be asked, what is the use of so elaborate classification, of which the candidates themselves are of course left in ignorance, I answer; *first*, to ensure our close study of each case individually; *secondly*, as a memorandum for future use, as circumstances may allow of our retaining permanent influence; and *thirdly*, as affording the means of judging hereafter how far our general expectations have been realized in the after-life of our candidates as a body.

further the object in view, than the printed questions which were put into their hands. I do not think so much about the answers: the chief gain was in keeping up through the week the thoughts and impressions of the lecture-hour. This has, I think, been done; and the process of thought has often been far more valuable than would be implied by the answer in which it ended.

To-morrow morning I shall preach a brief preparation sermon; and then my work is done. May God give the increase!

FEB. 27TH, 1848.

OUTLINE OF SERMON.*

LUKE X. 3.

“ Behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.”

Truly an alarming announcement. Had any lips uttered it but His who had all power in heaven and earth, we durst not now repeat it on this day of anxiety and hope. “Lambs among wolves”! Then what hope of escape? Why should we go forth, only to be devoured? To what purpose begin to feed on Christ’s green pastures, if, after all, temptations, as hungry wolves, are to be always about us?

Yet it is not meant to frighten, but to encourage. For—

1. The Shepherd sends them;—surely not to destruction. And is it not better, then, to know beforehand what is to be round about us, than to find it out afterwards, when it might seem as if the Shepherd had not foreseen the danger? Christ your Shepherd sends you into the world. He tells you plainly that you shall be “as lambs among wolves.” Oh! is not this better than to go forth, expecting to find all fair and smiling before you?

* Enlarged from notes by one of the candidates.

Is it not better, than to go looking for help and sympathy, and then to find with bitter disappointment, that in this sinful world you are indeed as "lambs among wolves"? Now, you know what is before you; count the cost. And be sure that in spite of cold looks, or harsh judgments, or artful devices to mislead them, the pastures in which you have to feed are safe for the lambs of Christ's flock; for, with a full knowledge of all these, and a full purpose and full power to preserve you, He bids you go. Go in peace to the duties and dangers of life; for the strong arm of the Shepherd shall keep his lambs from the wolves.

2. And, Secondly, you shall find "food convenient for you."* Wolves are there; for it is a wilderness: but there are green spots even in the wilderness. You may feel as if you could not keep up your sense of religion, when forced to live in a world so cold and ungodly. But be not afraid. He who sent you into it knew all this. Dreary and barren as the world may seem, there shall be food enough for you. If you begin to think that in such a place, the flock cannot find pasture, remember the cheering prediction,— "I send you forth as lambs among wolves"—I the good Shepherd, out of whose flock no lamb ever perished from want.

* Proverbs xxx. 8.

3. Lastly, why does He send you thither? That you may glorify Him. Yes: That *you* may glorify *Him*; you, poor weak sinners glorify the Lord of all glory. Let this sustain you, while it helps to make you very fearful of any approach towards sin, to know that Jesus sets His mark upon you, and counts all fruits of grace in you as honour done unto Himself. For His own name's sake, He will protect His lambs from the wolves.

Go forth, then, in faith and prayer. Your Confirmation-blessing to-day will repeat for you Christ's word to His disciples. To-day you take your places, as willing members of the Church which He has planted in the world. Make yourselves ready, from this time, to live as those whose lot is cast on green pastures in the midst of a wilderness. Be not afraid. Be not slothful. You are among wolves; but not by chance: your Shepherd sent you, and He will keep you to the end.

Finally, is there not a word here for others besides the young persons this day to be confirmed? Is there not a call for prayer? If they are going forth as lambs among wolves, shall they not be attended by the effectual fervent prayers of the whole congregation, which is witness to their vow? Soldiers of Christ! here are our new recruits. They take their places in your ranks to-day. On

behalf of these "children of promise,"* I ask your prayers. Come up here this afternoon in the spirit of prayer. Follow with heartfelt interest the solemn service. Parents, pray much for your children—friends, for all for whom you care—christians, for all, because all are precious to your heavenly Father. So shall the seed sown be watered by the dew of grace. So shall the spiritual soil "bring forth her increase, and God even our own God shall give us His blessing."†

FEBRUARY 28TH, 1848.—The Confirmation-day is over; and, if I could only be sure that the feast of ingatherings would be as abundant as the feast of first-fruits yesterday, I could sink all other feeling, and "thank God and take courage." Everything was favourable. The Lord's-day stillness—the crowded church—the last appearance among us of our beloved Diocesan—all combined to invest the service with more than usual solemnity. The very skies smiled on us. Between a lowering morning and an evening of heavy rain, came an afternoon of unbroken sunshine. A superstitious mind might indeed interpret it as of evil omen; the sunshine of the Confirmation season being interposed between the clouds of

* Gal. iv. 28. Rom. ix. 8.

† Psalm lxxvii. 6.

previous unconcern, and the darkness of future backsliding. I trust I saw a truer vision of the future, in the unruffled seriousness of the whole service. Meanwhile, of this I am sure; that the Spirit's influence rested on our assembly yesterday, and that with the great majority of my candidates, it was a day much to be remembered, a day of true self-dedication to the Lord, who "will not despise" the offering.

They met in the school-room to receive their tickets, and walked in procession through the Rectory grounds to the Church. After the Confirmation, they returned to the school-room; where I dismissed them with a few words of exhortation, and a brief parting prayer. The evening closed, I have every reason to believe, without the slightest infringement on the sanctity of a day, hallowed to them above all other Sabbaths, by the associations of their solemn vow.

"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory, for Thy mercy and for Thy truth's sake. The Lord hath been mindful of us, and He will bless us; He will bless the house of Israel; He will bless the house of Aaron."

MARCH 16TH, 1848.—My girls' sacramental class is now formed, and has attended to-day for the second time. There were on my Confirmation list, (including one too ill to be confirmed) . 22
 There have left the parish 4*
 Are not allowed to attend 2
 Apparently unwilling 3
 In attendance 13—22
 Among the "apparently unwilling" is included only one of the IIIId. class in classification (2); and not one of the Ist. or IIId. Altogether, the attendance is more satisfactory than I ventured to expect.

Besides these, I have three who were confirmed in 1844. None of them have as yet become communicants; partly, perhaps, for want of the encouragement which such a meeting supplies—partly from want of serious feeling at the time of their Confirmation.

* The numbers under this head are worthy of notice, as indicating one of the chief hindrances to parochial progress—the frequent changes of residence by servants. Of the seven here referred to—one fifth of the whole number—five were in service; and, had the Confirmation been held towards the end of the year, the new year would probably have seen this proportion greatly increased. Even while I write (May 27th), two more have been removed from home to service, and two others are not unlikely soon to follow. And all this, it should be said, from causes which do not, in a single instance, affect the character of the young persons concerned. The inference is plain; *that, so far as respects* direct and permanent influence on his own

MARCH 19TH.—First meeting with my boys' sacramental class. Less encouraging than the girls'—the time of year being unfavourable—not to speak of the greater difficulty of retaining our hold over them. The list stands thus :—

| | |
|-------------------------------|------|
| Confirmed | 14 |
| Not now in the parish | 3* |
| Not allowed to attend | 1 |
| Apparently unwilling | 5 |
| In attendance | 5—14 |

I have not as yet any of those confirmed on previous occasions; but one at least may be expected.

parish, the Clergyman's labours will, to a very great extent, seem to be thrown away. But, not less plainly, he may be cheered by the thought that his School and Confirmation Classes may be as centres of light, from which light may be radiated to every parish near him. Let him rejoice, since so it must be, in being permitted to labour, not selfishly for his own pleasure in the sight of an improving population, but freely for the good of Christ's Church dispersed throughout the land. Let him pray for grace on himself and every brother minister, that while young people are migrating between parish and parish, there may be the fair interchange of well-trained children of God, to be wherever they come, the "salt" of their new homes. And, for his own flock, let him learn to cherish, as among his best fields of usefulness, the school in which *all* the lambs are to be fed; because there, along with many who may hereafter migrate, and through whom his influence may be extended far and wide, he is sure to have some who will settle at home—the future fathers and mothers of Christian families, in whom his bread, now cast on the waters, may be found many days hence.

MAY 27TH, 1848.—Three months have passed since the Confirmation; and I find no cause to qualify my expressions of thankfulness for its favourable promise. The number of communicants is not yet large; but each month has seen some additions to it. The classes continue to prosper, though reduced in numbers, as respects the girls, by removals from the parish.

And now, it only remains for me to apologise for the minuteness of detail in which I have presented these Confirmation Records. Having once resolved to retain the narrative form, I have thought it well to keep clear of anything like dry abstractions, and to preserve the picture as the speaking likeness of a living original.* Besides, I have felt that even the statistical notices might be of use, as fair average specimens of what may be expected by any Clergyman who goes through his work as a labour of love. I should be most unwilling to have it supposed that I look on these results as in any sense approaching to a model standard, with which the minister may rest satisfied. My view is simply this: working on ordinary materials, and I trust not blind to the mani-

* More dramatic effect might have been produced, by transcribing or enlarging my written sketches of individual character. But, these pages may not improbably find their way into the hands of my own parishioners; and, where identification was so easy, what improved the *book*, might have impeded the progress of the *work*.

fold imperfections of my teaching, I have endeavoured to realise the *certainty* of the Holy Spirit's presence in the work. And now, enough has been attained, not to satisfy my desires, far less to encourage a boasting spirit, but rather to rebuke our weak faith, by the proof that the excellency and the power are indeed of God. It is as something like a *minimum* standard that I offer it to my brethren in the ministry; feeling assured that there is nothing here which the most diffident among the younger clergy may not hope for, as the result of an earnest prosecution of this portion of our appointed work.

The *system*, in its details, must be modified according to circumstances. Very large population would render parts of it impracticable. The essential features might, I should think, in any case be retained.

One feeling at least must survive all changes—a firm belief in the reality, and a warm interest in the advancement, of juvenile religion. It may be fairly confessed, indeed, that it is a subject surrounded with many practical difficulties. I could sometimes envy the easy acquiescence of sanguine minds in the first hopeful symptoms, as undoubted evidence of conversion; were it not for the bitter disappointment which must often be the reaction from their hopes. I cannot envy, but yet I cannot wonder at, the summary contempt with which

men of the world will generally pass sentence on the same appearances, as mere fancies of the moment, soon to be swept away by the light current of youthful folly and sin. Sure I am, however, that if the judgment of the former be often at fault, the whole principle of the latter is infinitely less philosophical, as well as less religious. If the Bible be true, the most favourable season for lasting as well as vivid impression, is this same despised season of giddy and unstable youth. This great truth must be our beacon-light, assuring us that dark though the waters be, there is safe passage for the ship. As secondary cautions, some other considerations may come in.

First, wherever there is the greatest susceptibility of true religion, there is also the most danger of a counterfeit; in sickness rather than in health, in affliction rather than in prosperity, in poverty rather than in wealth, and so too in youth rather than in manhood. The metal, which easily receives the genuine stamp, is likely to be the favourite for the operations of the coiner. Feelings, which flow like a stream through the meadow-land of fresh impression, soon and imperceptibly are turned aside; while those which have had to burst through the solid rock of hardened worldliness, move onward with a torrent's force, gathering new strength in their course. So that the same *amount of religious convictions* may be less deci-

sive in youth than in riper years, simply because there have been fewer obstacles for them to overcome.

In like manner, we may be more sanguine of the permanence of impressions, once made, on boys than on girls. It will be harder to produce them; but, when once produced, we may feel more sure that the depths of the inner man have been stirred. I might add, that we may generally assume a larger proportion of *undisclosed* feeling to that which is allowed to appear.

Again, the sins of youth are often not incompatible with some real susceptibility to religious influences. If a grown man gives himself up to the world, he drives away serious thought, or at least all spiritual views of religion. If he thinks about his soul, and apprehends the gospel scheme, he generally feels that his thoughts are worse than useless, if they do not influence his practice.* Not so, very often, with young persons. Inward feeling may to a strange extent be disjoined from practice, without any consciousness of inconsistency. In the heart, there may be much painful brooding over the sense of sinfulness; and yet, in the life, giddiness, thoughtlessness, if not more open sin. Hence arises a further need of caution in trusting even *honest* exhibitions of spiritual feeling.

* There is an exception to this remark—an exception which proves the rule. Where the mind's growth has been stunted, its religious feelings will often partake of the characteristic weaknesses of youth.

Yet, on the other hand, we may judge youth too harshly. A man reclaimed by the gospel from worldliness, may for a time seem to relapse into too eager pursuit of gain. We blame him, or warn him; but we do not deny the reality of his conversion. A boy or girl is betrayed into giddiness or sinful pleasure. We are apt to feel sick at heart, as though the good seed had been all choked or snatched away. It need not be so. The same tempter works on both. Only, the snares for youth are of a more palpable kind;—the lust of the flesh, instead of the lust of the eyes or the pride of life. Let us remember that the same Advocate prays for both, that their faith fail not.

These few hints may suffice on the philosophy of youthful religion. They might easily be enlarged. May I venture, in conclusion, to urge on all my brethren in the ministry the practical prosecution of so interesting a study? Circumstances having forced it on me as a duty, experience has made it a pleasure. It needs no high intellectual gifts. The taste for it lies often dormant, only needing development. And, were we selfishly looking to personal gratification, I know of none so unfailing, as to build for ourselves in the faithful memories of young hearts a temple of affection—a home to which our thoughts and feelings may *betake themselves*, when wearied with the vexa-

tions of our calling—a home stored with our best and most imperishable treasures, the abiding love of those for whom we have been privileged to strike the living rock that the waters might gush out, whom we have taught in childhood, youth, and manhood, “with joy to draw water out of the wells of salvation.”







